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[AT THE HUT.]

LOVE'S CHRISTMAS.

BY
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AUTHOR OF

"Christmas Before and Behind the Curtain," etc.

CHAPTER XII.

Methinks there's too much seeming
In the play. Behind the mask
There yawns a greedy face.

CHRISTMAS is past, but Christmas weather still remains; the woods of Heavithorne are still hard and crisp, the ponds covered with their silvery mantle, and the whole of nature under the rule and sovereignty of King Frost.

All the visitors have left the Vale, the school-girl has returned to her Markham's England and Bonnechose's France, the old cousin has quietly gone back to his domicile in town, little Tottie has returned, nolsens volens, to the nursery, and Mrs. Newton and Stella are alone.

Of the two other guests not yet disposed of, Sir Richard they see frequently, for he is still staying at the Box, and often drives or rides over, sometimes to dinner, sometimes for a morning call only.

Mrs. Newton always welcomes him with effusion, and never fails to dilate for an hour after his departure on his good qualities and immense wealth to her daughter.

Stella listens as if indifferently as if her mother were praising the virtues of the goddess Vishnu; sometimes makes no remark, and oftentimes rises and leaves the room to be rid of the subject, which to her is most unpleasant.

When Sir Richard comes he is always the same, cool and bland, self-composed and self-assured, like a man who knows that he has but to play a waiting game to win, and has therefore made up his mind to wait.

When he speaks to Stella it is always in the low, deferential tone and with the soft smile of a polished man of the world. Yet he hovers about her, appearing at her elbow when least expected, and suggests remarks and comments so opportunely

and persistently that Stella—beautiful Stella, whom a certain artist thought lovely enough to be reproduced in marble—feels that she hates him more and more each day, and that as her hate grows so does his power.

She feels that she is within the circle of a net which is gradually being tightened around her.

As for Louis Felton she has seen very little of him.

Sometimes she has seen the smoke of the Hut rising above the trees, and has taken it as a signal of his presence, at others the blue, thin, vapoury cloud has not hoisted its beacon, and she has known that he was in town or elsewhere.

The villagers—her pensioners—can tell her nothing about him, for he has brought a man-servant—a favourite model so they say—to serve as henchman, and has requested no other assistance.

A cartload of luggage of some description has arrived, and there are curtains up at the windows through which a ruby stain is thrown at night time upon the snowy lawn.

At all events if the master of the Hut is mysterious, the Hut itself looks cheerful enough.

Once Stella, when passing on her trusty little oob, fancied that she heard his cheerful voice singing in an upper room, but it might have been the model's—voices are deceptive.

One day Mrs. Newton, knowing nothing of her daughter's feelings towards either gentlemen, said:

"Stella, my dear, have you heard what became of that peculiar creature who came here on Christmas night?"

"Sir Richard, do you mean?" asked Stella, with the most demure face.

"Sir Richard!" exclaimed Mrs. Newton, with angry surprise. "Do you think I should call Sir Richard a peculiar creature? My dear Stella, what can you be thinking about?"

"Whom do you mean, then, mamma?"

"Why, that strange man, Mr. Felton, of the Hut."

"I have heard nothing of him," replied Stella.

"Nor I," continued Mrs. Newton, querulously,

"and I've asked every one too. A most strange young man; flighty and unreliable, too; and I should think very poor—miserably poor, Sir Richard said something about his being an artist of some kind—a sculptor I think. Very strange, I'm sure. I wonder at his staying on Christmas night as he did."

"So do I; so did he the next morning evidently, for he went you see, mamma, very rapidly."

"And showed his good sense," said the widow, tossing her head. "But, Stella, now I think of it, just remind me that I promised to go over and see Sir Richard at the Box, which he tells me he has so altered that it is quite a charming place. I think—mind, I am not sure—but I think he intends buying it."

"Indeed," said Stella, indifferently, "and when do you wish me to remind you of your promise, mamma?"

"To-morrow. We will go to-morrow."

Stella looked up with a pretty little frown.

"So soon?" she said, quietly.

"Yes; and why not?" said Mrs. Newton. "The weather is beautiful, I'm sure; you can't have any objection to calling on Sir Richard."

"I have no particular wish either way," said Stella, quietly; "we will go to-morrow if you wish it."

Just then a footman knocked.

"Come in," said Mrs. Newton.

"A man wishes to see you, madam; I have told him that he must send in his message, but he will not do so."

"Dear me! Indeed!" said Mrs. Newton. "Then send him away immediately."

"But he won't go," said the footman.

"How annoying and stupid you are. Send him in here then and I will soon send him about his business."

And she drew herself up into her most disagreeable attitude.

The footman retreated, and presently ushered in the grim fellow Stephen Hargrave, Sir Richard Wildfang's servant.

"Dear me," said Mrs. Newton, "is it you, my

good man? Why didn't you say it was Sir Richard's servant?"

"Because I'm not Sir Richard's servant," replied the man, in his usual gruff and sullen fashion.

"Not—then you have left his service, been misbehaving yourself, I suppose."

"No, I haven't; I haven't misconducted myself, and he can't say I have."

Mrs. Newton gave a little sniff of disbelief.

"I'm sure Sir Richard is too kind-hearted a master to discharge one of his men for anything short of misconduct."

"Well, he's discharged me," said the man, "and for nothing as I know of; he's tired of me most likely; perhaps I'm not civil enough."

"Well," interrupted Mrs. Newton, "what do you want with me?"

"I come, mum, to ask if you'd take me in, seeing as Sir Richard hasn't anything against me—"

Mrs. Newton rose with virtuous indignation.

"You bad man, I am astonished. Leave the room and the house immediately. To suppose that I would take for a servant a man whom Sir Richard had discharged! He must have some good reason for it, I am sure, and I shall hear the truth from him. But leave the room, sir; I am surprised at your impudence!"

The man turned slowly and looked back at the mother and daughter.

Stella, keener of eye than her mother, perceived that there was a look of suppressed amusement in the man's face, and was pained by it. His manner too set her thinking; it seemed so cool and self-possessed and so mechanical that he seemed like one repeating a lesson and going through an excellent piece of make-believe.

She said nothing, however, and Mrs. Newton, after dilating upon the impudence of the creature, dropped the subject.

The morning was as beautiful as a January morning could be, as, completely enveloped in furs, Mrs. Newton and Stella started for the Box.

When they arrived Sir Richard was standing at the door ready to assist them in alighting.

"I am overwhelmed by the honour," he murmured. "Never were a bachelor's quarters so graced," and, with sundry other compliments, he led them into the drawing-room.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Mrs. Newton, looking round upon the blue satin hangings and Louis Quatorze furniture. "I had no idea you could make so splendid a little palace of such an old-fashioned little place."

"Oh, a mere nothing," said Sir Richard, carelessly. "A mere nothing? What must your mansion in Warwickshire be like then?" exclaimed the wily widow, glancing at Stella.

"Oh, that is properly furnished, my dear madam," said Sir Richard. "But let us to luncheon. I am sure you must be both starved with cold and hunger. Allow me, my dear Mrs. Newton," and, with polished gallantry, he escorted them to the miniature little dining-room, which in elegance and taste quite matched the apartment Mrs. Newton had so much admired.

A superb little luncheon was laid, and Mrs. Newton enjoyed it immensely.

Stella ate but little and talked less, for Sir Richard devoted him entirely to the mother, and only occasionally addressed himself to the daughter, but on these few occasions his manner was delicately deferential and winning, and Stella, much as she disliked him, could not but admit that Sir Richard Wildfang was the pink of courtesy.

When the carriage came round and the ladies rose to go Mrs. Newton said:

"By the way, Sir Richard, that strange, odd-looking man servant of yours came to me yesterday and wanted me to engage him. Did you ever hear of such impudence, after you had discharged him? So absurd to come to me of all persons in the world."

Sir Richard shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "An impudent rogue and an ungrateful fellow, my dear madam. I packed him off at a minute's notice for an act of disobedience. There was no doing anything with the rascal. His heart was like stone, and kindness only hardened it."

"Dear me, it's shocking! And you were so good to him—rescued him from the street!"

"Something like it, madam. Saved him from prison I may say. But I am afraid it was a foolish charity, for if I am not mistaken the fellow is bound for that goal sooner or later. He has a disposition towards violence, and only keeps his ferocity under by a strong effort. I feel assured."

Mrs. Newton quite shuddered.

"What a dreadful ruffian! I am so glad, Sir Richard, that you got rid of him."

Sir Richard smiled again, and followed them, bareheaded, into the cold air, in which he insisted upon remaining until the carriage had started.

Then, when his guests' backs had fairly turned upon him, Sir Richard allowed his face to relax into something approaching an actual grin.

"If it were not for the girl's beauty and her money one could not endure the thought of such a mother-in-law. Cunning as a crab, and vain as a peacock. No matter, so that her cunning and her vanity serve my purpose!"

All the way home Mrs. Newton was loud in Sir Richard's praise. He was so courteous, so polished, so delicately kind, and, ah! so wealthy. What a happy woman Sir Richard's wife would be!

To all this Stella said nothing, but smiled wearily and sadly, and when they arrived home she retreated to her room, and was seen no more that day.

CHAPTER XXII.

Love and art! No art.

But taketh time and pains to learn. Love comes

With neither. Sheridan. *Emancipator*.

The following morning Stella came down looking little the worse for the headache which had been the alleged cause of her retirement of yesterday.

Indeed she looked as bright and fresh as the robins which came to peck up the crumbs which, according to her daily custom, she threw them from the window.

"Mamma," she said, after the breakfast, which was usually rather a harassing meal, in consequence of Mrs. Newton fixing upon it as a good opportunity to grumble at the servants, or anything else that came uppermost. "Mamma, I shall go for a ride this morning."

"Nonsense!" interrupted Mrs. Newton. "It is too cold; you will be frozen!"

"Indeed, I shall not!" urged Stella, in that tone which her mother knew meant no surrender. "It will be the best exercise for this weather, and Bessie wants a gallop as badly as I do. Let me go, mamma!"

"Well, if you've made up your mind to go, I think you might spare me the pain of asking my permission," said Mrs. Newton, ungraciously, and Stella ran up to don her habit.

Bessie, the mare, had certainly been in the stable for some days, and was as certainly a little fresh. On Stella found when the powerful little animal bounded off the lawn like a kitten, nearly upsetting her mistress.

"We'll try this pack, shall we, Bessie?" said Stella, crossing the animal's breast with her thickly gloved hands. "We'll have a canter under the trees, and a leap across the brook, shall we? Away with you, then!"

And the spirited little animal, reading no further, galloped off in the best of spirits.

Then they came to the brook.

Stella pulled up for a moment to double-check the reins, but Bessie moved her trouble by settling off in the direction of the right bank, and Stella, laughing at the animal's impatience, let her go.

Presently they came near the outer fence of the Hut grounds, and as Miss Bessie had been in the habit of leaping it for some years past she naturally imagined that custom was to be maintained, and rising at the fence leaped over as cleverly as a bird, but alighted with something more than a bird's weight on something that creaked and smashed with a terrific noise.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Stella, in alarm. "What have you done?"

"Broken my miniature greenhouse," said a cheerful and amused voice beside her, and Stella, looking round, saw the graceful form of Louis Felton standing beside the wreck of a fern case and looking up at her with a mischievous smile.

"Good morning," said Stella, blushing beautifully but looking fearfully embarrassed. "I am so sorry! It was all my horse's fault though; indeed it was. She is used to clearing this piece of fencing and making a short cut, and she did it this morning as a matter of course. Indeed, I am so sorry. What have I done?"

And she looked down regretfully at the broken glass and shattered framework.

"In the first place committed violent trespass, done damage to an excellent fern case, which has taken me four hours to furnish up, and lastly broken your bridle. See."

And he laid his hand upon the broken leather and held it up.

"Never was so much mischief done in so short a time," lamented Stella. "Pray, Mr. Felton, will you prosecute me?"

"Most decidedly," he retorted, smiling, "and have you cast in heavy damages. But, seriously, I am afraid for your own sake, Miss Newton, that you must dismount, and I am glad for mine that a snowstorm is approaching, which will give me an opportunity to display my hospitality and compel you to accept it."

Stella looked up at the sky as he spoke, and flushed again.

A snowstorm was evidently threatening.

"Will there not be time for me to reach home?" she asked.

"Yes, and to get wet through into the bargain,"

he replied, readily. "Come, Miss Newton, necessity knows no law."

She dropped the bridle reluctantly, and taking his hand dismounted.

Then he led the horse round the drive with Stella walking beside.

"What an alteration you have made," she said, looking round. "And yet it looks quite as romantic as ever. This shrubbery is surely the prettiest in England."

"Do you think so?" he said, with a gratified smile upon his face, which was handsome in its classical regularity and spirited in its expression of genius and culture. "Then I may hope you will approve of my reverence, which has not dared to destroy the antique air of the interior. Will you honour me by an inspection of my studio?"

And as he stood upon the first of the flight of broad stone steps he held out his hand.

Stella hesitated.

What would Mrs. Newton say?—what Sir Richard?—what all the proprieties together?

"My—my horse," she said. "I cannot leave her."

"No," he said. "I will have her taken care of and then trouble myself. Stephen! Stephen!" he called.

Stella started and turned round and saw the man Stephen Hargrave approach and take the horse, touching his hat to Stella as he did so with a keen, watchful expression on his set face.

Stella waited until he led the horse away, then she said:

"Do you know that that man was a discharged servant of Sir Richard Wildfang, Mr. Felton?"

"Yes," he replied, with a quiet, mischievous laugh. "I know it; if you remember the poor fellow James Hargrave on Christmas night at this door."

"I do remember," said Stella, and then added, mentally: "I shall never forget that Christmas night."

"Well, rough and early as he was, I think Henry to him then, and was quite sorry to hear that he was Sir Richard's permanent servant. The other night he came here, and, vowing that he was starving, asked me to engage him. Of course, he told me that he had been discharged for no fault; they never saw, and equally, of course, I did not engage him until I had written to Sir Richard."

Stella looked surprised.

"You wrote to him? He said nothing of it, and we luncheon with him yesterday."

Louis Felton smiled significantly.

"Sir Richard is a man of business and the world," he said, calmly. "But see there! the first flake of my prophesied snow. Will you enter?"

He held her hand to assist her up the steps, and, with the air of a Knight Templar, ushered her into the hall.

"Well," she said, "please go on; I am curious to know how you came to engage him after all."

Sir Richard courteously and speedily replied to my note by sending per special messenger an answer to the effect that the man, Stephen Hargrave, had left his service for no particular fault; that he had been disobedient and was too unpunished for a gentleman's servant, so as I thought his roughness would not offend my unrefined ears and sensibilities, and, as I did not dread disobedience so much as Sir Richard evidently does, I engaged him."

"And he has behaved—"

"Admirably," replied Louis Felton. "He is not a count in disguise, but he is civil and obeys like a Newfoundland dog. In fact, I congratulate myself upon having that rare acquisition, a good and faithful servant."

"You don't think," hesitated Stella, "that he has a bad face?"

"No," he replied. "I think he has seen some trouble or horror which he cannot rid himself of, and I think he fancies himself under some strain or mental slavery, to whom I know not. But let us leave Mr. Hargrave to time and circumstances. Will you not come to the fire? Fuel is not so scarce an article as it was on Christmas Day."

"Thank you," said Stella, glancing round the little hall with unfeigned interest. "But may I look a little longer? This might be the hall of one of King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table. It is beautiful. Why, there is not a piece of old furniture or armour in it younger than three hundred years."

"No," said Louis Felton. "I do not suppose there is."

Then he drew aside a curtain which had hidden a small oriel window, and Stella uttered an exclamation of admiration.

"How beautiful! And did you restore that stained window with your own hands?"

"Yes," he said, "and not so difficult an undertaking as it may seem. But will you walk into my studio?" he said, opening a door leading from the hall.

Stella, as curious as Bluebeard's wife, entered a large, lofty room, which was hung with black velvet

and faded tapestry and through which a stream of rose-coloured light, pouring from a stained window, fell upon a multitude of marble figures and statuary which were arranged round the room.

A block of marble stood in the corner, and in the centre of the room was a slab, upon which a group of figures was dimly discernible.

"How beautiful!" said Stella, under her breath.

"And did you carve all these?"

"All of them," he replied. "There are not many, and they are all very poor, or be assured they would not be here."

"Why not?" she said. "Where would they be?"

"Sold with the rest," he replied, laughing.

"I must go round and look at them," said Stella.

"What's that?"

"Ariadne," he replied, and he went round with her, listening with delight he did not care to conceal to her softly expressed admiration and wonder.

"And that you are doing now?" she said, looking towards the slab on the raised dais.

"Yes," he said. "But I am at a standstill for one figure. I want to perform an impossibility and cut a true portrait without a model."

"Cannot you get one?" said Stella.

"Not this one," he replied, looking down at her interested face with a strange, wistful smile.

"And is it impossible to convey a good portrait to marble without a model?" she asked.

"Nearly. Not always though," he added, very quietly. "I accomplished it once."

"You did?" she said. "Is the statue here?" and she looked round eagerly.

"No," he said. "I sold it. It was the best I had done."

"What a pity to sell it!" she said. "Why did you do so?"

"I sold it for two reasons. I wanted money, and I could not work while it was in the room. Have you never heard of the diamond cutters in Amsterdam, Miss Newton?"

Sometimes a man will get enamoured of a stone if it be fine and pure; and the over-zealous has to take it from him and set him to work on smaller and less fascinating gems. It was so with me. While the statue remained in the shadow I could not tear myself from it, but, like Pygmalion, spent all my days in vain longing that the cold marble might become endued with life and return me love for love."

His voice had grown dangerously soft and thrilling, and Stella, looking up at him, flushed beneath the wistful tenderness of his gaze.

"To—to whom did you sell it?" she asked.

"To Lord Marston," he answered.

Stella started, turned pale, and bent her eyes to the ground.

He saw her embarrassment.

"You know him?" he asked, with some surprise and a slightly heightened colour.

"Yes," she replied.

"And you have seen my statue?"

"Yes," she answered again, more faintly.

"Then the secret is out," he said, with a hurried, tremulous smile in his voice. "Miss Newton—Stella! can you forgive me?"

"I do not ask me, please!" she returned, growing crimson and pale by turns. "I—I cannot say. I do not know. Let us talk of something else. May I look at that slab?" and with a nervous haste she turned her face from him and approached the dais.

He followed her, his eyes fixed upon her face, his lips slightly apart, and his whole attitude expressive of devotion.

Stella bent forward and looked at the unfinished marble.

"You see what it is," he said, in a low voice. "It is a group—a family group of happy girls and an old man. They are gathered round a Christmas fire listening to a Christmas story which is being told by the best and most beautiful of them all. She is not cut out yet—there on that plain spot she is to stand—and when she is there, with her beautiful face and loving smile resting like sunlight upon the faces of the rest, the group will be finished!"

Stella turned her face to him for a moment, with a strong effort at calm indifference, but the effort broke down and her eyes sought the ground.

"Do you know the originals of the group? Do you recognize them and the missing face and figure? How shall I insert that? Look in the mirror yonder and cease to wonder that I hesitate and feel my skill powerless and my chisel profane when it approaches the portraiture of such beauty. Miss Newton, do not be angered—nay, rather than anger you should feel pity for the unfortunate creature who loves and yet cannot allow himself to hope!"

Stella turned towards him and opened her lips. She should have remained motionless, for her movement gave him courage.

"Stella," he breathed, leaning over her and taking her hand, "would you tell me that I am wrong in withholding the last atom of perfection to the whole? Would you tell me that to your loveliness and purity you add a tender heart and a noble courage? Were

you going to tell me that I, the poor sculptor, might hope? Oh! if you were, I pray you speak on that you may know the ineffable delight of making one heart in the world perfectly happy. Stella, you do not speak; you do not bid me be silent; you let me say I love you. Oh! my darling, my goddess, crown me with joy, and tell me that I not only love but am loved!"

Stella stood near the raised dais, Louis Felton's knee dropped on it, and he drew the white, warm hand, which he still held, down to his lips.

Stella tried to take it away.

"Don't take it away from me, Stella," he pleaded.

"Let it remain; let it, at least, whisper to me that you love me if your lips will not say so."

Stella hesitated for a second, and let it remain.

He sprang up and very audaciously caught her in his arms.

"My own, my very, only beautiful one! My statue has turned to life and love!"

Stella's eyes filled with tears.

"Stop," she said, dropping her head on to his breast and looking up to him with tearful but wondrously loving eyes. "I am not your own, for they will not let me be! Do you know the story I was telling on Christmas night—that blessed Christmas night when I first saw you?"

"No," he murmured, "you saw me before then, and I you."

"Do you know," she went on, "I was telling them of the princess who was not allowed to wed where she loved, and I thought—will you think me rude, unwomanly and forward?—that, perchance, I might be that princess, and that you—don't step me, I must say it—that you would have to leave me for ever."

"Never," he vowed, drawing her to him. "Come what will I will never leave you, unless you with your own lips should bid me. Then—"

"Then—well?" she murmured.

"Then I should break all my foolish statues and go anywhere out of your reach to hide the heart that would be as shattered as my poor marble!"

"You will never leave me till I send you away?"

"Never," he said.

"Then you will stay with me for ever," murmured Stella, with a delicious blush, "for I shall never say the word that would part us."

"Never—come what will we will never part, darling."

At that moment a shadow fell across the room and a voice, Stephen Hargrave's, said, roughly:

"The bride's mended, and the storm's over."

Stella clung for a moment, with a slight shudder, to her lover, then with a beautiful blush glided away with him.

Together, all in a trance—that delicious trance which falls to a man's lot once in his lifetime—they traversed the antique hall, and still in trance and he held her stirrup and guided the little foot which she confided to his hand.

All in a trance still she heard him murmur:

"Remember! Never. This is our secret!"

And she by a motion of the lips signified that their love should for the present be a secret one.

CHAPTER XIV.

I learnt dissembling at an early age, and woman's looks were all my page. Prior.

Bessie sped fast after her rest, and Stella was soon at home again.

Any woman well versed in love tokens would have been able to read the girl's secret in her happy eyes and blushing face, but Mrs. Newton, so wrapped up in her own plots and schemes for her daughter's—and her own—advancement, merely thought the blush a vulgar flash produced by ladylike exercise, and said so.

Luncheon over Stella was about to run away to her room for a little delicious reflection and meditation—she was dying to be alone to think and realize; but her mother requested her to remain and help her wind some silk, and Stella, without a murmur, took up her position in the orthodox fashion and endured what was to her an hour of mental torture.

When the silk was wound in a huge ball she rose and was about to make her escape, when a gentleman rode up the drive, and Mrs. Newton, in a tone of exaltation, exclaimed:

"My dear, here's Sir Richard!"

"I will go and dress," said Stella.

"No," said Mrs. Newton, in an absolute tone of command. "The idea of running away, the moment Sir Richard arrives; stay here!"

Stella went back to her chair with a dim foreboding of coming evil, and the next minute the footman announced Sir Richard Wildfang.

He entered, smilingly, calm, and self-possessed, as usual; and Stella, as she shook hands, noticed that he was better dressed than ever.

His collar fitted round his rather short neck with scrupulous exactness, his cravat was tied to the

quarter of an inch, and his gloves fitted like a second skin.

All this she noticed, and she fancied that she noticed also a look, a half-glance only, of comprehension pass between her mother and him.

Sir Richard inquired after their health with the greatest earnestness, and soon, after a few remarks on the weather, drew aside with Mrs. Newton, with whom he seemed to have some business conversation.

Stella heard something about trust money and investments, and fancied that she heard her own name mentioned, but she was indifferent, and so soon lost in thought that when Sir Richard came up to where she had seated herself she started.

When she looked round she saw that her mother had left the room.

Sir Richard stood over her, very much as an eagle or a hawk might poise at some distance over the bird he had doomed to be his prey, and regarded her in silence for a few minutes, then he said in his most measured and evenly polished voice—so different to that loved voice which was still ringing in her ears and echoing in her heart:

"Miss Newton, I have ridden over this afternoon on a most important matter—so important to me that I can liken it only to a matter of life and death."

Stella turned pale, and looked up at him with eyes that were almost a look of terror.

"So important that I hesitate even now, on the brink of disclosing it to you. Miss Newton—Stella, if you will allow me to call you by that endearing name—I love you! Do not start, I beseech you! Pardon me, forgive me, if I have declared the state of my heart and feelings too abruptly. When a man—so injured to the ways of the world, so apt in the ways of men—loses his heart so completely as I have done to you he feels that he cannot depend upon his old caution and self-possession. His passion, like a torrent, washes them away, and he is left to float upon its bosom like the veriest boy who has deserved life by proving himself able to love! My dear Miss Newton—Stella, as I implore you to allow me to call you—my love is of that character; it carries all self before it. I offer you my whole heart, for I have never loved another—"

He stopped abruptly and started.

At that moment a voice in the hall had called on some one by the name of Lucy!

"I—I—I—pardon me, but did I hear any one calling?"

"No; not for me," said Stella, too petrified, too astounded, too horrified even to take advantage of the excuse which he had unwittingly given her to beat a retreat.

"I—I thought I heard some one call a woman's name?"

"Yes," said Stella, "some one called Lucy, one of the servants."

"Oh," said Sir Richard, "I feared we were going to be interrupted. Miss Newton, to resume, I offer you my love whole and complete. I lay myself and all I possess at your feet. The world, as you may be aware, calls me a rich man; I may not be without influence; I may be able to place the woman who becomes my wife in a position good enough to fill half the fashionable world with envy. Miss Newton, all this I offer you; will you say yes? You will not refuse me?"

Stella rose and turned her white, cold face towards him.

"Yes, Sir Richard—I—I must refuse."

"Refuse?" he echoed, staring at her with the shadow of a frown on his brow. "Surely you have not considered—"

"I have considered everything," said Stella, faintly.

"But—but—if you do not love me you may do so."

"I never can love you, Sir Richard," she said, distinctly.

Sir Richard's shadow of a frown deepened and became a frown indeed.

But only for a moment, the next it cleared from his face and the eyelids drooped with a splendid assumption of sorrow.

"Miss Newton, you would strike a death blow to my heart if I did not even yet allow myself to hope. I can hope to prove to you by constant and untiring devotion how deeply I love you, and to win your love in return if I am assured that your affections are not placed elsewhere!"

He raised his small dark eyes and fixed them with a covert scrutiny on her face while he waited for her answer.

"That," said Stella, with a touch of her old pride, "is a question you have no right to ask, and one that I shall refuse to answer."

Sir Richard sighed.

"Ah," he said, "your coldness cuts me to the heart. I have no right to ask, and I will not. One thing only may I dare to do, and that is to warn. My love for you compels me to fulfil that duty. Miss Newton, beware!"

"Of what, Sir Richard?" asked Stella, eyeing him proudly.

"Of deceit. Beware that you are not already deceived, and that the fruits shall be seen hereafter. He whom you love—I mention not his name—may prove himself false not only to you but to honour."

"Stop, Sir Richard!" said Stella, her face set and passionate, her eyes all ablaze, her whole lithe, graceful body strained to its full height. "Spare your malice; such warnings are by me unheeded. If he whom I have chosen—be he whomsoever he may—should prove false to honour—I say not to me, but to honour—I will—"

Sir Richard broke in before she could continue: "Will thank me for what I have said and give me hope?"

"Yes," said Stella, with a scornful smile. "I dare risk even so much, Sir Richard, on the faith I hold in the honour of the individual you so malign."

Then, as he bowed down before her with a silent gesture of humble devotion, she swept from the room.

Reach a woman's heart and she is a lamb, touch her pride and she is a lioness.

(To be continued.)

TO WHOM SHE SAYS NO.

A WOMAN never quite forgets the man who has loved her. She may not have loved him; she may indeed have given him a "no" instead of the "yes" he hoped for; but the remembrance that he desired the "yes" always softens her thoughts of him, and would make him, were he minded that it should be so, a friend for ever.

There may be girls who make a jest of discarded suitors; but they are generally very young; and the wooing has been something that did not betoken much depth of tenderness. There are mercenary offers too that awaken only scorn and hate in the woman wooed for her money and not for herself; but really to have touched a man's heart is something not to be forgotten while she lives.

Always she remembers how his eyes looked into hers—how, perhaps, he touched her hand with his, and how her heart ached when he turned away without that which she could not give him.

She loves some one else. Some other man has all the truth of her soul—always has and will have—but she cannot forget the one who turned from her and went his way, and came no more. She is glad when she hears of his success, grieved when she knows that he has suffered; and when some day she hears that he is married—she who has herself been married for long years, perhaps—she who, at all events, would never have married him—is she glad then? I do not know. A woman's heart is a very strange thing. I do not believe she knows herself. Glad? Oh, yes—and is his wife pretty and nice? And then she says to herself that "he has quite forgotten," and that "that, of course, is best," and cries a little. M. K. D.

GAS AND COAL IN PARIS.—540,000 tons of coal were used in 1873 for the production of gas in Paris, and from this quantity 140,000,000 cubic metres of gas (4,944,321,200 cubic feet) were produced, which gives an average yield of 9.156 cubic feet of gas per ton. The gas is supplied through 287 leagues of main. The total number of lights is estimated to be 902,000, of which 85,000 are for the lighting of the public streets. The receipts of the Parisian Gas Company amounted to 31,500,000*fr.*, 1,500,000*fr.* of which were derived from the public lighting.

INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF HORSES.—The continued increase in the number of horses in the country is most satisfactory, from a military point of view. The return of live stock "in the possession of occupiers of land," in England and Wales, on 25th of June last, shows a very satisfactory increase in the number of horses, as well as other descriptions of stock. On June 25th, 1872, there were in England 978,012 horses belonging to agriculturists, inclusive of unbroken horses and brood-mares. In 1873 the number was 1,007,398. In Wales, on June 25th, 1872, the number of this description of stock was 120,273; in 1873 it was 123,523. The returns, therefore, show a total increase in England and Wales, during the twelve months ending 25th June last, of over 30,000 head in the number of horses belonging to land-holders alone.

THE ANGORA GOAT.—Australia is giving a good deal of attention to the cultivation of the Angora goat. The hair is said to make a very good "mo-hair" fabric, but its quality depends very much upon the nature of the locality in which the animals are reared. Undulating prairies, with a good supply of water, are best adapted to the habits of this goat. In sandy, hilly districts it thrives admirably, but the hair is inferior and falls off very quickly. The flesh is excellent, and is preferred in some parts

of Australia to the best mutton. The milk is of good quality, and yields a good supply of butter and cheese. The hair is worth about four shillings a pound, and one ram will yield about four pounds at each shearing; the best plan is to shear them twice a year, as this prevents the hair from falling off and from splitting; at each shearing it is about six inches long. Compared with the merino sheep, the Angora goat seems to have the advantage in the fact that the former produces only three and a half pounds of wool, worth two shillings and sixpence per pound, and that six merinos will eat as much as seven Angoras.

THE CHILDREN'S PARTY.

The cottage-windows their cheerful glow
Fling out over the new-fallen snow,
And the icicles, which the day's thaw leaves,
Are strung like pearls on the low-browed eaves;
While the sweet dance-music floats out on the gloom.

From the light and warmth of the festive room.

'Tis a children's party; and every one
Of the cottager's household joins in the fun.
There are womanly grace, and manly pride,
And age with youth, in its freshness, allied,
And "sweet sixteen," in her fairest mood,
And the toddling tyrant of babyhood,
And tall lads, fresh from college, as gay,
To crown the eve of a holiday;
While papa and mamma join in the rout
As the gray grandsire, with arms stretched out,
With smiling lips and protests gruff,
Gropes and stumbles in blind man's buff.

But suddenly the toddler flies
To his mother's skirts, with frightened cries,
And all are aware of a hapless pair
Who sadly peer through the window there—
Large eyes, and with hunger and woe,
That shyly look in from the night and the snow,
And the outlines of faces, like frozen stains,
Pressed lightly against the glowing panes.

The romp is over, and laugh and noise;
To open the door spring both the boys,
And kindly hands reach out in the gloom,
And drag the eavesdroppers into the room—
A boy and girl, so terrified

At the glitter and warmth and joy inside
That they cannot speak, but can only stare
At the wonder and wealth of the world in there.

"We meant no harm," says the girl at last;
"Indeed, we didn't! But as we passed,
Johnnie and me, to find a shed,
Or outhouse or somewhere to shelter a head,
Your song and laughter and music sweet
Flew into our heads, bewitched our feet,
And drew us right up to the windows warm.
Indeed, indeed, we didn't mean harm.
Did we, Johnnie? These folks, I'm sure,
Won't hurt two orphans so little and poor."

Loud laughs the cottager, long and loud;
And around the orphans the children crowd;
And mamma has drawn them to her embrace,
And lovingly kissed each small sad face;
And foaming tankards and viands rare
The tall college lads bring in with care;
While grandfather chuckles and slaps his knee,
And the cottager cries, with cheery glee:
"Orphans pay fines when they pass this way;
That is, when they come they needs must stay.
So join in the frolic, ye little ones; come!
This cottage shall henceforth be your home."

The romp is renewed; the girls and boys
Drag the new-comers into the fun and noise;
And age with youth again is allied,
And womanly grace, and manly pride,
And the tall, bright youths, and "sweet sixteen,"

And the toddling tyrant of all, are seen
Mingling once more in the jocund rout
Where the grandsire again, with arms stretched out,

With smiling lips and protests gruff,
Gropes and stumbles in blind man's buff.

N. D. U.

HOW TO MAKE AN ÆOLIAN HARP.—An instrument of the kind about to be described seems to be of very ancient origin, but was introduced during the last century. The Æolian harp produces a very pleasing melodious sound, especially in the open air, and is not difficult to construct. A long, narrow box the length of a window, or the position in which it is to be placed, is the first requisite; it must be made of thin deal, four inches deep and five in width. At the extremities of the top glue two pieces of oak about half an inch high and a quarter

of an inch thick for bridges to which the strings are to be fixed; within the box at each end glue two pieces of beech-wood about an inch square and the width of the box. Into one bridge fix seven pegs, such as are used for piano strings; into the other bridge fasten the same number of small brass pins; and to these pins fasten one end of the strings, made of small cat gut, and twist the other end of the strings around the pegs; then tune them in unison. Place over the top of the strings a thin board supported by four pegs and about three inches from the sounding-board, to procure a free passage for the wind. The harp should be exposed to the wind at a partly opened window; to increase the draught of air the door, or an opposite window in the room, should be open. The strings in a current of air sound in unison; and with the increasing or decreasing force of the current the melody changes into pleasing, soft, low sounds and diatonic scales, which unite and occasionally form very delightful musical tones. If the harp can be placed in a suitable position so as to receive a sufficient draught of air, in a grotto, or romantically situated arbour, or hidden in some shady nook near a waterfall, the effect of its sweet sounds is very charming.

RIISING IN THE WORLD.

You should bear constantly in mind that nine-tenths of us are, from the very nature and necessities of the world, born to gain our livelihood by the sweat of our brow. What reason have we then to presume that our children are not to do the same? If they be, as now and then they will be, endowed with extraordinary powers of mind, those powers may have an opportunity of developing themselves; and if they never have that opportunity the harm is not very great to us or to them. Nor does it hence follow that the descendants of labourers are always to be labourers. The path upward is steep and long, to be sure. Industry, care, skill, excellence in the present parent lay the foundation of a rise, under more favourable circumstances, for the children. The children of these take another rise, and by-and-bye the descendants of the present labourers become gentlemen. This is the natural progress. It is by attempting to reach the top by a single leap that so much misery is produced in the world, and the propensity to make such attempts has been cherished and encouraged by the strange projects that we have witnessed of late years for making the labourers virtuous and happy by giving them what is called education.

The education which we speak of is bringing children up to labour with steadiness, with care and with skill—to show them how to do as many useful things as possible—to teach them to do them all in the best manner—to set them an example in industry, sobriety, cleanliness and neatness—to make all these habitual to them, so that they never shall be liable to fall into the contrary—to let them always see a good living proceeding from labour, and thus to remove from them the temptation to get at the goods of others by violent or fraudulent means.

CLOTHING THE GREAT MEN.—The Court of Aldermen have just given pieces of cloth of 4½ yards each to the First Secretary of State, the Lord Chancellor, the Chamberlain of the Household, the Vice-Chamberlain of the Household, the Lord Steward, the Comptroller, the Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, the Chief Baron of the Exchequer, the Master of the Rolls, the Recorder of London, the Attorney-General, the Solicitor-General, and the Common Serjeant. They will come out smart when the new clothes are made, so thoughtfully and kindly provided by the Court of Aldermen. This is an old custom of days gone by, when the recipients were not so well off as at present. But four and a half yards of cloth are still acceptable in any well-regulated family. It is a fine Christmas pastime.

THE SHAH ON ART.—In the Shah's newly published Diary he tells us how he went to the Crystal Palace, with which he was greatly delighted, and how he bought some pictures there. Then he adds: "The picture of a donkey was seen, and I asked the price of it. The director of the Exhibition, a fat, white bearded man, who gave information about the prices, told me it was a hundred pounds sterling—equivalent to two hundred and fifty tumans of Persia. I remarked: 'The value of a live donkey is at the outside five pounds. How is it, then, that this, which is but the picture of an ass, is to be paid so dearly for?' The director said: 'Because it is not a source of expense, as it eats neither straw nor barley' (the Eastern substitutes for hay and oats). I replied: 'True; it is not a source of outlay, but neither will it carry a load nor give one a ride.' We laughed heartily. Then, as time was short, and we were extremely fatigued, we went home. The Albert Hall, too, has its own special garden, very nice."



[THE NECESSARY EVIL.]

THE GIPSY PEEK; OR, A SLAVE OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Good counsel is a wise man's gift
And past all purchase; give heed
To it.

Butler.

"HEAVEN help me! He is murdered!"
Such words, uttered in the very deepest tones of despair, by an aristocratic young lady, were calculated to startle the most blasé of solicitors.

They startled Mr. Levy.
"My dear madam!" he exclaimed, eyeing her with astonished perplexity. "Surely you do not apprehend that this sham warrant was prepared to cloak a murder?"

"I do," said Florence, with a calm that was awful in its artificiality. "I do. I believe—the gentleman mentioned in that paper has been cruelly murdered, and that I shall never see him again!"
As she finished this assertion she fell back in her chair, so white and statue-like that the solicitor flew to his hand-bell, but, on second thoughts, let his hand fall as it was about to strike it, and poured out a glass of water.

"Drink this, madam," he said, earnestly. "I do not wish to call for assistance unless I am compelled—pray drink it and make an effort to remain conscious."

Florence drank the water, and, with a deep sigh, recovered herself.

"Thank Heaven!" said Mr. Levy. "If your fears are well founded, madam, you have need of all your strength."

"Yes," said Florence, faintly, then covered her face with her hands.

Mr. Levy waited a minute or two, looking at her anxiously, then he said:

"Madam, if I can assist you in this case I shall be happy to do so, though a criminal matter is quite out of my usual line, but—but—in this case—"

Florence thanked him, and looked up at him with a troubled, inquiring look.

"I—I feel inclined to trust you," she said. "And yet I feel bound to a certain extent to keep a secret—his secret."

"Your friend's?" said Mr. Levy, tapping the mock warrant.

"Yes," said Florence, hesitating. Then she added, suddenly, "At least I can tell you this much."

And, in broken sentences, which cost her more than she could have thought possible of endurance, she told the grave, quiet lawyer just so much of

Tazoni's life as the world knew, carrying the recital down to that present hour.

Mr. Levy listened with knit brows.

"A most singular case," he said. "Is this all you intend confiding to me?"

Florence hesitated.

"I can tell you no more," she said, "without divulging a secret I am bound by every tie of honour to keep inviolate."

Mr. Levy inclined his head.

"Can you tell me," he said, "if you are aware of the existence of any motive for this crime, and of any person or persons to whose advantage his death would be?"

Florence turned pale.

"To answer it I should have to tell the whole story, and that I cannot do," she said. "This I may say that if a conjecture which had taken complete possession of his mind were true then there was a person who would feel more secure by Mr. Forest's death."

"Then," said Mr. Levy, "to that person our suspicion must first direct itself. Will you tell me who that is?"

"I dare not!" said Florence. "It is not possible that he should commit such a fearful crime or be cognizant of it. Besides," she added, as she remembered, with a thrill of gloomy satisfaction, that Lord Raymond was away from London, and down at the Vale, "besides, the person whom you would suspect if I were to tell you all was miles away from the spot where the deed I dread was done."

"Are you sure of that?" said Mr. Levy, with professional doubt.

"Yes," said Florence. Then, with a troubled look, she added, tremblingly: "At least, he left London some days ago and has not been seen since."

Mr. Levy smiled.

"My dear madam, that only heightens suspicion. Away from London—your friend was last seen alive at Farm End! Madam, if you were to lay the case before the authorities at Scotland Yard the person you speak of as having the motive would be the first person the detectives would be ordered to watch!"

Florence wrung her hands.

"I do not know which way to turn! Every path seems barred with impossibilities!"

"May I suggest that you should advertize?"

Florence shook her head.

"He is either dead or shut away somewhere out of the reach of advertisements," she said.

"Then," said Mr. Levy, "the course is plain. Scotland Yard will solve the problem. If you please, madam, we will go there. I shall be happy to accompany you and help you with your statement."

But Florence shook her head.

"I dare not!" she said.

Mr. Levy naturally looked alarmed.

"Do you fear danger to yourself?" he asked.

"No," she answered, "but to him, if he is alive."

"Oh," said Mr. Levy, "you are afraid that he may criminate himself in some way?"

Florence flushed.

"Yes," she murmured. "He would be the first to blame me for seeking publicity. There are strong reasons for his keeping his real identity a profound secret. If he were to be found through the agency of the police matters of import would be disclosed which he would rather die than have made public."

"I understand," said Mr. Levy, looking perplexed. "Really, madam, I am at a loss to invent some means of helping you."

And he took two or three paces across the room.

"I have it!" he exclaimed, with soft suddenness.

"Of course, madam, this matter must be cleared up? You would like it cleared up?"

"I shall not know a moment free from misery until it is," said Florence.

"Then, as you will not allow me to make use of the usual channels, I must have recourse to a secret one. I know a most discreet and intelligent man—a private detective. He is the very model of his class—silent as the grave, clever at scenting out a secret as a weasel is a rabbit, and a man to be thoroughly trusted. I mean that should a forger employ him to discover the villany of another he would confine himself to the service for which he was paid without the slightest regard to the criminal pursuits of his employer. A man to be relied on, madam."

Florence shuddered.

"And he—he would discover what had become of my friend, you think?" she faltered.

"I am sure of it," said Mr. Levy. "The man I speak of has the endurance and sleeplessness of a bloodhound when he is on the track. He is the man for us; but it is useless to mince matters or to assume a false delicacy over such a critical matter—he is expensive!"

Florence drew a well-filled purse from her pocket, and, deducting a sovereign for her cab fare, laid the remainder on the office table.

"That will be sufficient to convince you that I am in earnest," she said, anxiously. "Tell your man to spare no expense, to give himself heart and soul to the search, and I will not forget to reward him."

Mr. Levy mounted his stool, jotted down a few notes, asked a few more questions, and took up his hat.

"You will allow me to see you to your cab, madam?" he said.

Florence dropped her veil and inclined her head. Mr. Levy looked as if there were still some forms to be gone through, and Florence suddenly discovered it.

"You wish to know my name?" she said.

Mr. Levy bowed.

"I may want to communicate with you, madam. You may withhold your name if you please, but I would entail delay—perhaps endanger the success of our scheme."

"Yes," said Florence, "Mr. Levy, I will trust you. There is my card. You will write my communication you may have, and send it, directed to the care of this person, she is a milliner, upon whom I can depend."

Mr. Levy glanced curiously at the card, and was almost guilty of a most unprofessional stare. Lady Florence Dartangle, the well-known daughter of Lord Dartangle, of Hazlecourt!

The solicitor had never had a client higher in the social scale than a knight's widow, and in a moment he felt inclined to bite his tongue out for mentioning anything of his detective's experience.

"Your ladyship may rely on me," he said, as she entered the cab. "I shall throw myself heart and soul into the case."

Florence liked the honest, enthusiastic tone of his voice, and, inclining her head, fell back in the cab, and, covering her eyes with her hands, was driven away.

Now it happened that Mr. Levy was really the honest, trustworthy gentleman that Florence had judged him to be.

He returned to the office, and the first thing he did was to count the money she had left and enter it in a book to her credit.

Then he leaned his head upon his hands and tried to get something like a clear idea of the case. But it was difficult, almost impossible.

A man was missing—might be murdered. His name was Frank Forest, and he was a well-known poet and literary character.

A lady—no doubt his fiancée—had come to him, Mr. Levy, with the intelligence, but had absolutely refused to tell the whole story or to give the name of the person whom he saw she half suspected of the crime of murder or of kidnapping.

"It's the most confused case I ever heard of, and the only man to help me is—"

There was a knock at the door at that instant, and Mr. Levy paused in his cogitations to explain:

"Come in."

The door opened and there entered Mr. Samuel Hitchem.

"Good morning," he said, in his usual slow and sleepy way. "Quite alone and doing the idle, sir?"

"The very man!" exclaimed Mr. Levy. "Talk of the angel and you hear the rustle of his wings! Come in. Close the door after you and sit down."

Mr. Hitchem, with his self-possessed and sleepy smile, obeyed, and, quietly brushing his hat as if it were a rabbit he was about to skin, jerked his head on one side and waited.

"Well," said Mr. Levy, "how are things going down in the shire? I thought you were there still?"

"Come up this morning," slowly answered Mr. Hitchem. "Things are going on as well as might be expected; better perhaps, considering the customers we have to deal with. Ah, Mr. Levy, one ought to be artful nowadays, considering the knowing ones there are about us!"

"Yes," said Mr. Levy, with a grave smile, "and you are artful, Hitchem, we all know. I'm rather glad of it just now, for I have a case for you which will require as much detective genius as a search for a needle in a bottle of hay would!"

Mr. Hitchem smiled innocently.

"Quite a new line of business for you, Mr. Levy."

"Yes," said Mr. Levy, with a sigh, "and I don't know what I want with it, but I'm not the first man who has been coaxed into a troublesome case by a pretty face and a woman's tears. But before I go into particulars—and by the way, there are precious few of them, unfortunately—tell me what has brought you here."

"Well," said Mr. Hitchem, "I came on a friendly errand, Mr. Levy."

Here he got up, turned the key in the door, and, putting his head near the solicitor, whispered:

"It's nearly all up with Goleonda Mine!"

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed Mr. Levy, shrinking back pale and breathless. "Never—impossible! Why, it was as safe as the Bank of England."

Mr. Hitchem smiled significantly.

"Was," he said, "and is, but it won't be the day after to-morrow."

Mr. Levy turned to his safe, took some papers from an inner drawer, and all trembling and anxious summoned a clerk, and after whispering an order despatched him with all possible haste, and then returned to the desk.

"Phew!" he exclaimed, wiping the perspiration

from his brow. "You gave me quite a turn. Do—do you think I shall be late?"

"No," said Mr. Hitchem, coolly. "You'll save your money, but there's hundreds as won't. My eye! when I think of the ruin that'll fall like a thunder clap in a few hours upon some of the biggest families in the land it makes me whistle."

And he whistled.

"The highest in the land," muttered Mr. Levy. "You are quite right. The Goleonda was deemed as safe as the bank itself. Why, there are a dozen peers who will be swallowed up in it."

Mr. Hitchem smiled.

"But thanks to Samuel Hitchem, there will be one survivor the less."

Mr. Levy grasped his hand.

"Thank you, Hitchem. I'll do you a good turn for it. I won't ask you where you heard the news. I believe you keep a dozen little imps to whisper in your ear when things go wrong. You'll make your fortune sure, and I've got something here that will help you to it."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Mr. Hitchem. "What is it?"

"Well," said Mr. Levy, and he commenced a repetition of Florence's story, omitting the names.

When he had finished Mr. Hitchem scratched his eyebrows.

"It's like asking a fellow his address of a man, and omitting the name and the number of the street, the city and the county; in fact it's a rare puzzle as it is, but tell us the name of the missing party."

"The name," said Mr. Levy, "is Frank Forest."

Now this was the most critical moment of Mr. Hitchem's life. As that name sounded on his ear he felt as befuddled and overthrown as ever man did yet.

But did he show it?

No, not by a crumb of his face or the slightest winking of his eyes.

He waited a moment just to give Mr. thumping heart time to regain its usual steady pulsation, then in his coolest, most business-like tone said:

"Hem! aise name, sounds quite refreshing. So Mr. Frank Forest is missing, is he? And what's the address?"

Mr. Levy told him.

"And the name of the lady who is making the inquiries?"

"Lady Florence Dartangle."

Again Mr. Hitchem endured a spasm of astonishment without a single sign.

"I've heard the name before," he muttered, languidly, "and I shan't forget it. And that's all?" he asked.

"That is all, I'm sorry to say," said Mr. Levy. "I wish I could give you something more to work on—not that I think you need it, for your genius is something wonderful."

"Thank you," said Mr. Hitchem. "That's what they call a compliment in good society, sir, ain't it? However, we'll do our best, our very best, I may say," he said, closing his note-book and putting on his hat, as if he were doing a secret trick in the conjuring way. "And now, sir, if I may make so bold, I'd say, keep this little affair quiet; leave it to me to work out in my own way."

"Yes," said Mr. Levy. "But suppose the poor fellow is murdered?"

"Then all the noise in the world wouldn't bring him to life again," said Mr. Hitchem, "and only give the criminal the office to be off."

"And if he isn't?" said Mr. Levy.

"Then I'll unearth him," said Mr. Hitchem, with a quiet smile of conscious power, "if he's buried under the ruins of Pompeii—wherever that may be."

And with a slow good morning he strolled out with the air of a man who had nothing in the world on his mind, nothing in the world to do, and everybody in the world to help him to do it.

But when he got outside the street and inside a city churchyard he planted himself opposite a tomb, and, winking at the epitaph, chuckled with the most intense enjoyment.

"Well," he muttered, "here have I come upon the right Simon Pure, at the very critical moment, to find him vanished—cleared off the scene and wiped out of the scene! And then I steps into a friend's to give him a bit of useful information, and hang me if he don't employ me to look after a man I've been hunting down on my own account for the last six months! Oh, it's as good as a play; it's better! But Luke's a sharp chap, and he's got a sharp lad! Fancy them ricing me up to town, getting a few hours' start of me, and whipping their man off. But he's cleverer, very clever! Mind you ain't too clever, though, my fine gentleman! There was a fox once as over-reached himself and ran into a trap, thinking it was a nice convenient drain. If you two clever ones don't take care you'll find yourselves running into a very ugly noose, which Mr. Jack Ketch sets a purpose for such knowing foxes!"

And winding up his soliloquy with this piece of gratuitous advice to persons unmentioned, he chuckled again, and went on his way, as sleepy and insignificant, as sharp-eyed and unnoticeable as ever.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Oh, love, we walked in woods and fields,
And trod the marble halls of state,
But found in all still ensnared
Thy name, thy worship, and thy fate.

We must leave Tazoni still in the hands of his enemies—Mr. Hitchem on his track, and Florence enduring all that nameless agony of suspense—to take up the thread of the narrative where we left it with Sir Harry Beauchamp.

Since he had made confession of his love to Tazoni he had seen his way clearer through the mists of feelings which had lately so encompassed him.

For a surely he loved Lurli, the maid of whom Tazoni spoke in such enigmatical language; for a surely, too, he was determined to woo and win her, provided she was worthy in purity and honour to be his bride; and within his human heart Sir Harry, whenever he made the reflection, always added with a groan that he felt as if he must have her unconditionally.

Love with him was not a weak man's pastime, but a strong, true-minded man's passion.

Tazoni's note reached him on the Saturday morning, and he waited at home until past noon, and then called his man to dress him, intending to ride down to Mr. Flanagan's and make inquiry for Tazoni, when he became so anxious to see the judged Tazoni was anxious to see him.

While he was dressing there was a commotion outside in the lobby, and his man called from the room with burning indignation to reprove the cause of it, but he entered again almost immediately, and with an air of apology, said:

"I'm very sorry, Sir Harry, but it's one of the men from Richmond. He says he's hidden up with a thief."

"What is it?" asked Sir Harry, languidly. "Tell him to bring it here."

The man, one of the grooms from Sir Harry's Richmond villa, entered, and, in a nervous fit at all the splendour around him, began fumbling in his pocket.

"Be quick," muttered the valet, scandalised by the presence of a mere groom in his master's sanctuary. "Be quiet and get out!"

"I've—lost it!" stammered the man, aghast.

"Lost it?" suddenly echoed Sir Harry. "Let him alone, Parker; you scare away what little wit he has! Search again, Sam."

Sam searched again.

"No—I've lost it, master," he said, sorrowfully.

"No, I haven't!" he added, suddenly. "I've left it at Richmond, like the idiot I be! I changed my coat and left it in the old coat pocket, and I've been and ridden all these miles for nothing."

"You shouldn't if I was your master," growled the valet.

"Sam, you're a dunce!" said Sir Harry, good-naturedly. "No wonder his men loved him. Now what's to be done? You must ride back for it."

"The horse is dead beat, Sir Harry," said the man, half crying.

"Indeed! and you are not to be trusted if he were not, Parker, tell them to saddle Magnolia. I'll ride over myself."

Magnolia was brought to the door, and Sir Harry, after writing a short note, explaining the cause of his absence and stating that he should be back in a few hours, gave it to Parker with strict instructions to deliver it to Mr. Forest if he should call.

Then Sir Harry leapt into the saddle and rode off to get his telegram.

It was a beautiful morning, and, disinclined as Sir Harry was to be out of the way on this particular day, he could not but glory in the fresh air and the bright sun. Besides, he consoled himself with the reflection that he should only be away a few hours, that Tazoni would surely wait or come again later in the day, and that all would be well.

In addition to this he had no idea of the contents of the telegram, and he felt that it was imperative he should learn them at the earliest moment.

So he rode on, and Magnolia required little rest until she came to a steep hill.

He walked her up this and at the top looked round him.

He was on the edge of a wide-stretching common, beyond which lay the villa—at least he argued so from the winding of the road.

"Suppose we try a short cut, lass," he said to the horse. "Short cuts are generally the longest way round, but I don't think this will be, and as time's precious we'll try it."

Magnolia pricked up her ears, and, seemingly perfectly cognizant of the meaning of the speech, trotted off across the common.

As Sir Harry neared a small stretch of plantation

his horse was almost startled by the sudden apparition of a man, who rose from behind a bunch of ferns, and, after scanning Sir Harry narrowly and with a suspicious eye, blew a shrill whistle, which rang over the common in clear notes like a clarion.

"If I had time, my fine fellow," thought Sir Harry, "I'd ride back and learn why you gave that signal."

He rode on, and descending a gentle declivity was brought to a standstill by an unexpected sight.

A gipsy's camp—small and compact as usual—lay in the hollow.

It was a picturesque sight, and Sir Harry reined in to look at it.

As he did so his gaze rested upon the centre tent, which was marked with a strip of red and made singular by a splendid fur spread outside it.

"That's a fine skin," he murmured.

At that moment the curtain of the tent was pushed aside, and a young girl stepped out on to the fur.

Standing, shading her eyes from the rays of the winter sun, she formed a picture beautifully fresh and graceful.

Sir Harry gazed with artistic admiration. Suddenly the girl dropped her hand and turned, her face for an instant before she re-entered the tent.

In that moment Sir Harry's blood rushed at race-horse pace to his face and flew back again, leaving it pale and agitated.

In the graceful gipsy girl he had recognised the mysterious Lurli, the victim of Lord Raymond's cunning.

He uttered an exclamation of mingled delight and astonishment which startled Magnolia, then startled her more thoroughly by touching her with the spurs and crying:

"On, lass! on!"

Magnolia rose half on her haunches at the suddenness of the command and dashed forward.

As she did so, and before she could approach the outer wing of the tent, two shrill whistles resounded through the air in rapid succession, and half a dozen stalwart, swarthy-faced gipsies sprang from the earth apparently, and threw themselves upon Magnolia's bridle.

Sir Harry pulled up instantly and looked swiftly round, his lips compressed, but his face calm as ever.

"What's the matter, my good fellows?" he exclaimed, with a quiet smile. "Do you want to frighten my horse?"

"You can't pass here," said one of the men, the one who stood nearest to him.

"And why not?" asked Sir Harry, raising his eyebrows. "Have you rented the common, my friends?"

"You can't pass this way," repeated the man, with a frown. "What do you want to ride over the tents for? You've no business here. You must go round."

"But suppose," said Sir Harry, grasping his riding-whip and weighing it thick, heavy silver stock in his hand, "suppose I say that I prefer to ride straight instead of making a detour to please your whim? What then?"

"Why, then," retorted the man, glancing at his companions, "we're six to one and we'll make you."

"Try it!" said Sir Harry, and up went the riding-whip.

Up also went six formidable sticks; but at a word from the man who had acted as spokesman they were lowered again.

"Look 'e care," he said, in a menacing tone, to Sir Harry, "you see we mean what we say, master, and what we mean we'll do. So do you take a word in time and turn the horse aside. You can't have any business, the likes o' you, with us!"

"But I have, as it happens," said Sir Harry.

"What business?" asked the man, with a scowl.

"Business which every man should have when he finds an unprotected girl in the hands of a gang of ruffians. My business lies in that tent yonder, so fall back or I'll break the man's head who chings last to this bridle!"

There was a threatening growl, the riding-whip came down with a fearful crash upon Colin's shoulder, and the next instant a dozen hands had torn Sir Harry from his saddle and half a dozen sticks were poised ready to bar his way to any part of the common for ever more, when suddenly a woman's scream rang through the air, a flash of a crimson dress broke the green of the common and a girl bounded like a tigress into the midst of the group and stood over the prostrate man very much as a tigress would stand to protect her cub from the hunters.

"Colin—Jake! all of you! What does this mean? What has this gentleman done to you that you should set upon him like a kennel of hungry hounds? Shame! Six to one too!"

Then with a blush of the shame which she apporportioned to them she turned, and, bending over him,

held out her hand, saying, in a tone of troubled sympathy:

"You are not hurt, are—oh, say you are not hurt!"

Sir Harry raised his head and turned his face—which he had covered with his hands to protect it from the rain of murderous blows—fully to her.

Lurli started and shrunk back.

The gipsies, thinking she had seen cause to regret her interference, crowded round again quite prepared to continue and finish their task, but Lurli beckoned them back and stood covered with blushes, with bent head and trembling lips, like a wild deer caught in a net.

Sir Harry sprang to his feet.

"At last!" he breathed; then aloud he said, with his thorough-bred tone: "Muchum, I thank you! You have saved my life—may I ask another boon?"

Lurli raised her eyes and dropped them again as suddenly.

"What is it, sir?" she faltered.

"That I may speak with you for a few minutes alone," said Sir Harry, with the deepest respect his voice could convey.

Lurli inclined her head, then with the air of a savage queen, motioned her two zealous guards aside.

They hesitated and with evident reluctance drew back only a few steps.

"You see," she said to them, in Boinany, and with a smile of assurance, "you are six to one! Can he work any harm to us while you are near and on the alert? He is a friend I tell you. Draw back out of hearing, not out of sight!"

The men drew back, formed a sort of ring at a respectful distance, and remained with their sticks firmly clenched ready at the slightest signal to rush forward and annihilate the intrusive stranger.

Sir Harry waited until they were out of hearing distance, then with his fine eyes fixed with admiring tenderness upon her downcast face he said, in a voice thrilling with suppressed excitement and love:

"You spoke truly when you called me friend. I am your friend, and the friend of your dearest friend."

Lurli looked up quickly with a sudden eagerness in her eyes.

"Of whom do you speak, sir?" she said.

"Of one who has been seeking you night and day for many weary months past."

"Of Tazoni?" asked Lurli, her eyes sparkling, her lips trembling.

"Of Frank Forest," replied Sir Harry, drawing a little nearer, at which all the watchers in the distance grasped their sticks tighter.

Lurli sighed.

"I know not the name," she said.

Then suddenly she added:

"What is he like?"

"He is tall, stalwart, handsome, with dark eyes, a kindly bearing, and a sweet, musical voice," said Sir Harry, growing suddenly and most marvellously poetical; indeed it was difficult to be otherwise while addressing the romantic beauty before him.

"It is he!" exclaimed Lurli, with a joyful cry.

"It is he! Tazoni is found at last!"

At her cry the six guards rushed forward with astonishment.

"Brothers!" exclaimed Lurli, "Tazoni is found—is found! The stranger has restored him to us! Tazoni is found!"

And she burst into tears of joy.

At the sound of her voice every soul in the camp came helter-skelter up to swell the group.

"Tazoni found? Tazoni found?" they shouted, thronging round. "Where is he?"

"Within a score of miles," said Sir Harry. "All well, he shall be with you before sunset."

"But," he added, turning to Lurli, with a troubled brow, "what is Frank Forest—Tazoni as you call him—to you?"

"He asks us that!" exclaimed Lurli, spreading out her hands towards her men. "He asks what is Tazoni to us!"

Then she turned with a swift Spanish gesture to Sir Harry.

"Stranger, Tazoni is our chief."

"Your chief?" said Sir Harry, changing colour. "There must be some mistake. My friend cannot be the man you think him. He—he—I avow solemnly, and may Heaven hear me—that I mean no offence—but I would not disappoint you. My friend is a gentleman bred and born, a great man, a poet!"

the lips that gave it utterance. "A gentleman! a poet! A gipsy can be these and more!"

"I know it," said Sir Harry, bending uncovered before her successful indignation. "I see, a gipsy can be a queen!"

Lurli's pride vanished from her face, her gaze softened, and with a noble impetuosity she laid out her hand.

"Forgive me, sir, it was a foolish pride, a girlish pride, but this is all the poor gipsy's possessions now! Tell me more of Tazoni, for it is he! I feel it is he!"

And she touched her bosom lightly.

Sir Harry, in his clear voice, addressing all of them, but her in particular, said:

"If Frank Forest is Tazoni, then I say you should be proud of your chief. He is all I have said and more. Noble hearted and noble minded, he is the friend and the peer of the highest in the land, and he is worthy of the respect of the best and truest."

Can I say more? Yes, I can tell you that all these months, doubtless since the moment he left you, his one purpose in life has been to discover and restore this lady. I know that it has been the chief object of his life, only a few hours since he left me with the prayer on his lips that he might be able to find her."

"Now I have found you," he continued, turning to Lurli, "and I will hasten to him—as soon as a duty I have to fulfil has been performed."

He looked out his watch as he spoke, and as he held it up Lurli saw that blood was running down his coat sleeves.

Instantly her face paled and with a look of tender horror she caught his hand.

"You are hurt—bleeding!" she exclaimed.

"Those cruel men have hurt you! and while we have been selfishly listening to you, you have been in pain. Come with me!" she said, hastily, almost dragging him by the hand to the tent. "Take off your coat!"

"No, no," said Sir Harry.

Lurli stamped her tiny foot imperiously.

"Take it off this moment! Zillah, bring some cold water! Oh, Heaven! how cruel! how cruel!"

But Sir Harry only laughed.

"Truth! it is nothing," he said. "A blow from an honest stick hurts no man! It is nothing—a mere scratch!"

Lurli sank down on one knee and taking his arm in her small brown hands bathed it with cold water as gently as only a woman—in love too!—can.

Sir Harry looked down upon her exquisitely shaped head and glossy chestnut hair with more than admiration and thought he would have cheerfully consented to have his arm taken off to keep her near him and sighing so tenderly.

Lurli, looking up, caught that look, and, blushing crimson, bent over the arm again with nervous suddenness.

"You do not remember me?" said Sir Harry, in a low, musical whisper.

"Yes, I do," said Lurli, softly. "You are the gentleman who used to row up the river when I was shut up in that dreadful house!"

And she shuddered.

"Do not remember it if it gives you pain!" said Sir Harry, quickly. "Yet I am so glad you remember me."

"Why? You remembered me, that was strange!" said Lurli, innocently.

"Yes; I remember you," said Sir Harry, "and I shall never forget you!"

Lurli looked up with a startled, timid, yet pleased expression.

"Never forget me?" she said.

"No," he said, "never! I have thought of you every day, every night since I first saw you! For a long time I did not know your name, but when I did I found myself always thinking of it, a great many times—muttering it. 'Lurli! It is a sweet name. No wonder Tazoni loves it!'"

"Ah, Tazoni!" said Lurli, with a start, as if she had almost forgotten even him in her interest in the stranger's words. "Will he be here soon?"

"Yes, I know he will come directly I tell him you are found!" said Sir Harry; "and if I am to take the joyful news to him soon I must go now!"

"Now?" said Lurli, absently. "Well, will you come with Tazoni?"

Sir Harry's face flushed eagerly.

"Should you be glad to see me?" he asked, bending over her until his lips nearly touched the thick tresses of her glorious hair.

"I—I—don't know," murmured Lurli, tremulously.

"Your arm is all right now—I have bandaged it! See! That's gipsy fashion; but, oh, I am sorry, sorry you should have been hurt for my sake!"

And the tears filled her eyes.

"And I," said Sir Harry, taking her hand, and wondering whether he dared lift it to his lips—he would not have hesitated in the case of a London belle—"I should have been glad to die for you!"

Lurli snatched her hand from his grasp in sweet confusion, and turned her face away, all trembling with mingled dread and delight.

"See!" she said, "your horse is ready!"

Sir Harry sighed.

"I see," he said. "I must go, I suppose. And I may come back? Well, I will fly—yes, fly! and when I come back I will bring my welcome with me!"

And then he dared all and pressed his lips to her hand.

A dozen men sprang forward to hold his bridle and help him start; but not one uttered an apology. Gipsies are never ashamed of their blows!

CHAPTER XLVIII.

This fell sergeant, Death,
Is strict in his arrest. *Shakespeare.*

Sir Harry rode away with his whole frame tingling with delight.

He had found Lurli! He had indeed befriended his dear friend, Frank Forest, and his service had brought him sweet reward! Now—now that he had seen her closely, had watched her beautiful, innocent smile and pure blush, he knew that he loved indeed!

Urging Magnolia to her utmost, he pulled up at his own villa flushed with delight and eagerness to secure his telegram and return to London with the good news for his friend Frank.

A servant came out to take his horse, and he hurried in.

"Where's the telegram that stupid Sam left behind? Bring me his coat."

Some minutes were consumed in the search, for Master Sam, in his hurry to start, had flung his coat under the bed, where of course no one, for some time, dreamt of looking.

At last they brought the coat to Sir Harry, and he extracted the telegram from the pocket.

Tearing open the seal, he read:

"Lord Dalkine, of Wargath Castle, to Sir Harry Beauchero. 'Come at once. I am dying!'"

Sir Harry's face paled and his hand shook.

Lord Dalkine was his uncle.

He could not disobey the summons, though this was the only communication he had received from his relative—with whom he had quarrelled—for years.

"Saddle me a fresh horse," he exclaimed. "I must return immediately."

The grooms saddled him his hunter, and, hastily tossing down a glass of wine, he sprang into the saddle again.

He was sorely tempted to diverge for the common, but duty sternly forbade him.

If his uncle were really dying, too much time had been lost already.

Yet, anxious as he was to reach the invalid, he could not help feeling sorry and regretful that he was taken from London just at this critical time.

To-day he wanted to have returned to the gipsy camp with Frank Forest.

On Monday he was pledged to join Frank in his attempt to circumvent the marriage of Lord Raymond, and, although he was now relieved of his great anxiety in connection with that event by his discovery of Lurli, still he did not want motives for wishing to be present at that important and secret ceremony.

"However," he muttered, "it cannot be helped. I must tell Frank how it happened, and he must manage that villain by himself—he is quite equal to the task—if I cannot get back from Wargath Castle in time."

Determining thus, he reached London, and his first inquiry when he entered his rooms was:

"Mr. Forest been here, Parker?"

"No, sir," said the faithful valet.

"No!" exclaimed Sir Harry. "How extraordinary! I never knew him to break an appointment before! Parker, I must start for Wargath Castle at once, Lord Dalkine is ill."

"Not dangerously, sir, I hope?" asked Parker, anxiously.

"Yes, dangerously," replied Sir Harry. "The telegram which that stupid fellow Sam left behind him was from his lordship saying that he was dying and asking me to come at once. So pack up, will you, while I write a note. Mind, I am not in to any one save Mr. Forest. If he should come show him up at once."

"But," faltered Parker, "you have had no luncheon—nothing, Sir Harry!"

"There's a time for eating and a time for fasting—if you haven't time for the one there is scarcely time for the other," said Sir Harry. "There, by the time you can understand that, Parker, I shall have finished my letter and shall be ready to start."

Parker, knowing his master's obstinacy of old, did not wait to remonstrate, but hurried away to pack the portmanteau.

Sir Harry seated himself at the writing-desk, and wrote the following note hurriedly:

"MY DEAR FRANK,—I waited in for you until I

was compelled to start for Richmond, at which place a stupid servant had left a telegram for me. On the road, or rather to the right of it, I cut across the common, and when half-way over came upon a gipsies' camp. Six men tried with cheerful alacrity to put an end to my inglorious career, and they would doubtless have succeeded but for the intervention of a beautiful girl, who drove them off like an empress, and so saved my life.

"Frank, keep calm! I think I see you when you read this, and I know how your face will flush and your eyes sparkle! Guess who this forest maiden is! You cannot? I'll tell you, then. None other than your Lurli, and my love! Yes, chance had done for us what your terrible slavery had failed to accomplish. There beside me, proud but flushing, stood the face which has haunted me all these long, long months. I was so astounded—though I had caught sight of her from a distance indistinctly—that all my calm vanished; so did here, until I happened to doubt your identity with a chief of theirs called Tazoni. Then she drew herself up and overwhelmed me with proud scorn. She was a queen! an empress! a perfect June maddening in her maidenly dignity and beauty. But—there, I must not go on, for I have only a few minutes, but when I think of her I forget everything else.

"Well, we were soon friends, and I promised to come and fetch her after I had secured the telegram which lay waiting for me at the villa. I started mad with love and hope, to find that the telegram was one dated Wargath Castle, in Scotland, and that it came from my uncle, Lord Dalkine, who summoned me to his death bed. Of course I am obliged to start at once. I have not seen his lordship for years, we having quarrelled, and I would not be too late for the whole world. I write this, therefore, to send you straight to the common, where, if you are one called Tazoni, you will find an enthusiastic welcome from a score of most valiant subjects, and a loving, trusting-hearted girl ready to fall upon your shoulder! Go immediately you have read this! And now, if I should not return before Monday, you will have all the responsibility and pleasure of thwarting and unmasking Lord Raymond. I shall be able to catch the Monday express. If I should not I shall return shortly, and shall wait most anxiously for a letter from you, saying how the affair on Monday progressed. Don't spare him Frank! He is a black-hearted villain! and deserves, if not the gallows, transportation for life. Here comes my man. I have not another moment. My best wishes go with you.

HARRY BEAUCHERO.

Rapidly folding and addressing it to Frank Forest, he gave it to Parker.

"Give this to Mr. Forest immediately he arrives. Tell him that I have started for the north, and that I shall be back in a week."

Then he ran downstairs, leapt into his cabriolet, and was driven off.

There was just time to catch the train, and once in the carriage and on his way Sir Harry felt himself somewhat relieved.

There is a wonderful consolation in the reflection that you are rushing on to your destination at the rate of fifty miles an hour when you ardently desire to reach that destination on a matter of life and death.

On Sunday morning Sir Harry arrived at the little country station, very tired and consumed with anxiety.

A carriage was waiting for him, and a footman hurried to meet him.

"I'm glad you are come, Sir Harry. His lordship is dreadfully ill!"

"Still alive!" thought Sir Harry, with a sigh of relief, and he leant back with closed eyes as the carriage dashed along the well-kept road of the Dalkine estate.

In half an hour he had alighted at the castle.

There was a solemn hush about the place. Servants stole about on tip toe; the great drawing-room was darkened, the large marble hall was spread with carpets to deaden the sound of passing feet.

Preparations were made all through the house for the approach of that greatest of monarchs—King Death.

There were two doctors in the library, and they received Sir Harry with solemn shakes of the hand.

"Can I see him?" said Sir Harry.

"Yes," said one of the doctors, "I think you might. I am afraid nothing could harm him or make him worse, Sir Harry."

Sir Harry followed the doctors upstairs, and with breathless anxiety entered the great, still chamber, into which the daylight entered through closely drawn blinds.

On the bed was the old lord, very thin, very weak, and very eager.

"Is he come? Is he come?" he asked.

Sir Harry approached the bed.

"My lord," he said, bending over the old man, whom he had not seen for years, "I have come, I would have come before if I could have pursued you would have been glad to see me."

Lord Dalkine motioned to one of the doctors to raise him, then looked long and earnestly at the handsome face of his nephew.

"Harry! Harry!" he said, "we ought never to have quarrelled! I was a stupid, stubborn old man—and like an old idiot expected you—a Dalkine!—to be unlike me; you were stubborn too, Harry! You were, you were—and quite right. What was it all about? My memory fails me, Harry. I can't remember what we quarrelled about, Harry. It does not matter."

"No, indeed, my lord," said Harry, whose eyes were filled with tears and his heart with remorse.

Oh, if we could see the last hour—should we ever quarrel?

"Call me uncle, as you used," said the old man.

"Uncle," said Harry, "will you not lie down? You are exhausting yourself. Give me your hand," and he held the thin, wrinkled hand in his.

"Harry," said the old man, "are you married?"

"No," said Sir Harry, in an agitated whisper.

"Ah, I remember now what it was all about, Harry. I wanted you to marry some one—and you refused, stubbornly as a Dalkine you refused! And you are not married?"

"No," said Harry.

"I'm glad of it," said the old man, endeavouring to press his hand. "Listen, Harry, I've a secret that lies on my conscience! Send—send—some of those men away. I shall die fast enough without all these doctors."

This, though said in a whisper, was sufficiently audible to cause the medical men to fall back considerably.

"Bend your head," said the old earl.

Sir Harry did so, still keeping tight hold of the thin, cold hand.

"Harry, I was married!"

"You, uncle?" said Sir Harry. "I thought you were single?"

"No," said the old man, with a faint, sly smile, "I deceived you all! I was married, but, Harry, shame on me, I was ashamed of my wife! She was beneath me in birth and position, but she was nearer Heaven than I have ever been, Harry. Ah, my boy, if we could have our time to live over again, how differently we would use it! I was cruel to her, Harry, and she fled from me to her own people again. She was quite right, Harry, quite right. They loved her, and so did I; but they knew her worth, and I, idiot-like, did not. So she ran away from me, and I never saw her again!"

Harry pressed the thin hand, which had contracted with a sudden pain.

The old lord resumed, with a sigh:

"Harry, boy, in half an hour or so you will be Lord Dalkine. Don't shake your head, I know it. There is plenty of money, more than you will ever need, lad, for I have been saving all those years. Do you forgive me for what I have done?"

"I forgive you, whatever it is, uncle," said Sir Harry, in a low voice. "What is it?"

"I've made a will and left all the money over a certain sum to my wife, if she is alive, and if not to her children, if there were any. I tell you this, Harry, because I know you will search for them. Perhaps the lawyers wouldn't. They would like to see the money go to you, Harry; and so it shall, a great deal of it—but the rest—the rest you—you will see it finds them—her children, my wife?"

"I will—I promise," said Sir Harry, solemnly.

"Now, uncle, you have not told me who she was or her name."

"She was a gipsy," said the old earl, "a gipsy! Ah! when I used to warn you, Harry, of making a mésalliance you little thought I had done so myself! She was a gipsy, and her name was Vera—Vera! She was the queen of her tribe—a beautiful woman and a good one, if I could have but known it. Ah, Harry, Harry, I cannot talk any more—I am going fast. Look in that bureau—there by the window. Certificate of marriage—and the will. Harry, what did we quarrel about? I forget. Shake hands."

Harry's hand clasped the old man's. It felt cold and powerless.

The doctor drew near. The old earl was dead.

(To be continued.)

PATRICIAN FESTIVITIES.—Great preparations were made at the Hôtel Basilowski for Christmas, where the children of Queen Isabella II. had the pleasure, with their young friends, of gathering the fruit from a huge Christmas tree, much of which was of a nature to surprise and please the children of a larger growth who were present. The Prince and Princess Czartoryski resumed their entertainments on New Year's Day, for which occasion a large number of invitations were issued. There was no dancing on that evening, but excellent music.

A ROYAL MARRIAGE.—The marriage of the Princess Louise (daughter of the King of the Belgians) with Prince Philip, Duke of Saxony, is finally fixed for Thursday, the 4th of February. Prince Philip

has ordered a considerable amount of jewellery. The dowry of the princess is to be 1,800,000*l.* (72,000*l.*). The prince will have a considerable fortune of his own. Three court balls are to be given at Brussels, the dates of which have not yet been fixed, but all the princesses invited to the marriage are expected to be present.

EXPECTATIONS.

CHAPTER LI.

CARON had time to grow thoroughly impatient before Mrs. Malverne made her appearance. He walked the floor of the great abbey drawing room, poked the fires, became restless, and finally drew a sigh of relief as the widow came rustling into the room.

She received Vernon with marked cordiality, and seemed in such excellent spirits that he remarked upon it.

"I have had a piece of great good fortune," explained Mrs. Malverne, smiling. "I have just fallen heir to an income of a thousand pounds a year. That seems small enough to a gentleman, I suppose, Mr. Vernon, but to me, who have so lately been penniless and dependent, it is absolute wealth. Besides that, however, I have a beautiful villa on the Thames."

"You are fortunate," responded Vernon. "You have laid aside your mourning, I see. I conclude that your fortune is not an inheritance from a near relative."

"It is the gift of a friend. I may tell you more some day, Mr. Vernon, but not now. Tell me about Sir Mark Trebasil. Mr. Weston heard this morning, at Trebasil village, that Sir Mark had been stricken down with paralysis. I have sent over twice to the castle to inquire after him, but the report in both cases has been that he is lying at the point of death. Can this really be true? Will he die?"

"There is no help for him, I fear," sighed Vernon. "He may linger a few days, but death has set its seal upon him."

Mrs. Malverne shuddered and grew pale. "It is so terribly sudden," she said. "I can hardly believe it. Yesterday he was so strong and well, and now dying. Only last night—"

"I know what you would say," said Vernon, quietly. "Only last night he was here at the abbey—"

"You knew, then? He told you that he visited Miss Stair in her room after midnight?"

"Yes, and that he encountered you afterwards on the stair."

"I was never more shocked in my life," said the widow, "than when I beheld Sir Mark Trebasil emerge from Miss Stair's boudoir. He saw me. I do not think that Mrs. Bittle detected my presence. But think of it! Joliette Stair, the pet and pride of Madame Falconer, the old woman's chosen heiress, who supplanted me and inherited the wealth that should have been mine—this girl, I say, would be the mock and scorn of all Cornwall if I were to tell all that I know about her."

"But you certainly will not reveal what you saw last night?"

"Certainly not. Miss Stair knows that she can depend upon my silence in all things."

"There was a significance in these words that enlightened Vernon."

"You told me that you had come into possession of a villa on the Thames, and an income of a thousand pounds a year," he said. "Do these come from Miss Stair?"

Mrs. Malverne hesitated, but finally answered:

"Yes, they come from her."

"As the price of silence?"

"Yes."

"Then, as you have not seen her to-day, it is clear," said Vernon, astutely, "that you are in possession of other secrets of hers?"

"I am. She has many secrets," and there was a sneer in Mrs. Malverne's voice, "and I am the repository of certain of them."

"She pays high for your discretion. I should like to share your knowledge," said Vernon, drawing nearer to the widow. "You and I have agreed to assist each other in our mutual schemes. Have I not a right to your confidence?"

"Certainly not," said Mrs. Malverne, quietly. "I have relinquished my project of marrying Sir Mark Trebasil. The affair of last night has shown me that he, like you, is one of Miss Stair's victims. It is odd that that slender girl, with her big black eyes and olive skin, should prove such an enchantress of men. Of course he will die. But if he should not die he is lost to me, being her lover. In either case, whether he lives or dies, you must see that my project of marrying him, to speak plainly, is utterly vain?"

"It looks so," said Vernon, coolly. "If he lives, as you say, he is Miss Stair's lover, and consequently out of your reach. If he should die, as he will die, he is none the less beyond your grasp. What then?"

"I see nothing before me but retirement to my Thames villa," declared Mrs. Malverne, "but that retirement presents charms of its own. I am a widow, and, therefore, my own mistress. Miss Stair will give me horses and a carriage. I have friends and acquaintances in town. I shall keep up a modest establishment, receive my friends, give garden and water parties, and other modest entertainments, and shall in time, no doubt, make a good marriage. I am not ill-looking," and she stole a glance into an opposite mirror, "and to be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Vernon, I intend that my second marriage shall be as brilliant as the first was foolish."

Vernon was thoughtful. The woman's vanity, her schemes, her plans, all seemed petty enough to him. But he knew that she was witty and shrewd, and that she could be useful to him. He desired to get at the secret of her power over Joliette. But how was he to command the widow's confidence? An idea flashed upon him. Why not offer to marry her himself? In view of his brightening prospects she might not disdain an alliance with him.

"You have spoken of me as one of Miss Stair's victims," he remarked, after a long pause. "In that you are wrong. I admire Miss Stair, but I have not the remotest thought of making her my wife. I should like to marry. I make no pretences of love and passionate admiration, Mrs. Malverne—Helena—but it is you whom I would make my wife. You have been frank enough to express your willingness to marry again. Will you marry me?"

The widow looked astounded. The proposal had taken her entirely by surprise.

"What do you expect to gain by a marriage with me?" she demanded. "You do not even profess to love me. Does my income from Miss Stair seem large enough?"

"Bah! What does that income amount to in my estimation? I want to marry you, Helena Malverne, because you are a woman after my own heart. You can share my hopes and help my plans. With your aid I could be the richest man in Cornwall. Sir Mark Trebasil is stricken with death. Have you thought that after his death I shall be master of his estates? I shall be his successor at Waldgrove Castle."

"But Harold Park—"

"Is dying of spinal disease. He dies childless. Charlotte Lyle is dead. I shall inherit the great Trebasil estates. And I expect to procure the reversion of the baronetcy in time, when I shall be Sir Charles Trebasil. Next week, at this time, I shall occupy in all respects, with the exception of his title, the proud position Sir Mark Trebasil held only yesterday."

Mrs. Malverne reflected. Certainly, if Vernon had given her a true statement of his prospects—and she believed that he had done so—a marriage with him would be an alliance more brilliant than she could hope to secure should she refuse him. At length, with the air of having made up her mind irrevocably, she exclaimed:

"I accept your offer, Mr. Vernon. I will marry you!"

Vernon uttered no expression of delight, nor did he seek to embrace her. But as if he felt that the occasion demanded some show of warmth and pleasure, he bent forward and raised her hand to his lips.

"Now to carry out the terms of our compact," he said. "What is this secret of Miss Stair which you hold in your keeping?"

"I can't see how her secrets can interest you," said Mrs. Malverne. "As my promised husband, what have you to do with Miss Stair's private affairs? I suppose you have a lingering love for her? I can dissipate that pretty promptly. Miss Stair is worthy only of your contempt and aversion. She is a weak and wicked woman, who, if her past were publicly known, would be driven from the country. You thought her innocent as an angel? She seems so. But I am unable to unmask her real character and show her to the world as she is. I know her in all her wickedness and weakness."

"What is she? What has she done?"

Mrs. Malverne glanced towards the doors, and up and down the length of the great drawing-room, and then lowered her voice to a whisper, as she asked:

"Do you know where she spent those months of her absence from England when she went abroad with Madame Falconer?"

"In the Pyrenees."

"At what place?"

"I don't know. I never heard."

"You had little curiosity," said the widow, with a sneer. "As for me, when I found my young lady so reticent I surmised a secret and resolved to unearth it. I discovered with considerable difficulty that she had not stopped at any usual place of resort in the Pyrenees, and finally found out that she had stayed at a certain Château Croisac, near Arpignon, in the province of the Hautes Pyrénées."

"Well," said Vernon. "What else did you discover?"

"I wrote to the curé of Arpignon, making inquiries after Madame Falconer and Miss Stair. I received an answer to my letter only yesterday morning. I must say that the curé's letter only confirmed my own previous suspicions."

"What did he write?" demanded Vernon, breathlessly.

"You could never guess it. He wrote that Madame Falconer and her charge, the little mademoiselle, had spent four months at the Château Croisac, and that during their stay there the little mademoiselle—our Miss Stair—became a mother."

Vernon was speechless with consternation.

"You look overwhelmed," said the widow. "No wonder. Do you remember our riding-party to the Black Cove, and our halt on the return at a little cottage in a cutting or lane, this side of Langworth? Do you remember the scene when Miss Stair rushed into an inner room at the sound of a baby's cry, and how we beheld her soothing the child in her own arms? Well, that child was her own!"

"Impossible!" breathed Vernon, hoarsely.

"She has the child brought to her here every night by its nurse," continued Mrs. Malverne, enjoying Vernon's dismay. "I found a baby's sock in her room one morning."

"There must be some mistake. This is too incredible. A child! Where is the curé's letter? Let me see it!"

Mrs. Malverne changed colour.

"The letter—I haven't got it!" she exclaimed. "To tell you the truth, I gave it to Sir Mark Trebasil yesterday, and it is now in his possession. I wanted to show him what kind of woman was this one whom he seemed to love. I thought if he would know her in her real character—"

Vernon uttered a frightful malediction. He did not suspect that the letter which he had found burned on Sir Mark's hearth was the curé's letter to Mrs. Malverne, and not Joliette's letter to the baronet—but such was the case.

"The child still lives, then?" he questioned, his voice trembling.

"Yes. It lives, unfortunately, a reproach to its mother—"

"Is it a girl?"

"No—a boy."

Vernon repressed a groan. His livid countenance, his white lips, his burning eyes—all attested to his inward agitation.

"Were you so fond of Miss Stair?" asked the widow. "You look almost like a dying person."

"A boy?" said Vernon, huskily, unheeding her exclamation. "A son to him! Another obstacle in my path, when I believed my way clear at last. Do you know who that boy is? Do you know who Joliette Stair is? She is Sir Mark Trebasil's unacknowledged, disowned wife. And this boy is Sir Mark Trebasil's unowned son."

The consternation of Mrs. Malverne nearly equalled that of Vernon.

"Sir Mark seemed astonished to learn of the existence of the child," she said, when she had grown calmer. "He took away the curé's letter, promising not to betray me, and last evening, relying on his promise of silence, I made my bargain with Miss Stair. And so she is really Lady Trebasil? If Sir Mark dies, she will proclaim her marriage and put forward her son as his successor."

"Sir Mark said nothing to me last night concerning the boy's existence," said Vernon. "I comprehend the reason. He does not believe the child to be his own. Was ever such a game of cross-purposes? He fairly worships Miss Stair, and yet he is so madly jealous of her that he has refused to acknowledge her as his wife, believing her unworthy to bear his name. What a strange world!"

"If Sir Mark Trebasil leaves a son, what becomes of your prospects of inheritance?" demanded the widow, shrewdly.

Vernon fairly ground his teeth together.

"To think that a child—a mere infant—should step in at the very last minute between me and all that I have worked for!" he ejaculated. "I will not bear it!"

"What will you do?"

Vernon looked full into the eyes of Mrs. Malverne. There was that expressed in his small black eyes that struck a momentary terror to her soul.

"You are no squeamish Puritan—no shrinking girl," he whispered. "You have a bold spirit, something like my own. Suppose that you beheld the golden prize just within your reach, and that as you held out your hand to grasp it a baby's hand intervened, what would you do?"

"I should be tempted—"

The widow paused, with an apprehensive glance around her.

"I see that we are alike, Helena, we have cast our lot together; our fates must be the same. Help me, and I will make you the richest lady in Cornwall, and I will make you any marriage settlement which you may dictate. I will load you with jewels, I will be your very slave."

The widow's eyes glittered. In imagination she beheld herself mistress of Waldgrove Castle, wearer of the Trebasil family jewels, the owner of a princely income. She thought of Juliette, whom she hated bitterly, and she asked:

"What can I do?"

"Sir Mark's son is his natural heir. If the boy were gone I should be heir. That we understand. If Juliette's boy were taken from her, she would have no claims to make. Sir Mark made no marriage settlement upon her. She would never even avow her marriage if her boy were dead. The boy, therefore, must be taken from her. Listen to me, Helena. I have a plan, and you shall help me to it."

CHAPTER LII.

The interview between Vernon and Mrs. Malverne was protracted until a late hour. When the villain finally took his leave the widow had promised to enter into his plans heart and soul, and to make his interests her own.

"I've made a good stroke this evening," he said to himself as he hurried homewards through the park. "I have bound Mrs. Malverne to me. She will work for me henceforth, and when I am done with her, as I shall be when I am securely installed in Sir Mark's place, I can easily rid myself of her and marry Juliette! I have a genius for plotting. Gannard will be delighted with this night's work. Gad! I haven't moved too soon in the matter. Another day even and I might have been too late! A secret heir—a son of Sir Mark Trebasil—in existence, and I did not know it! We cannot move too promptly. This very night Gannard must be on the watch in the abbey grounds. I would watch myself, but my absence from the castle at this juncture might arouse suspicion."

Upon arriving at the castle he entered at the great door and went to his own chamber. He found Gannard in possession, and hastened to impart to him the discoveries and events of the evening.

The valet approved the enlistment of Mrs. Malverne in their service, and declared his intention of watching in the abbey grounds that very night for the nurse with the infant heir of Trebasil.

"It is my opinion that the nurse will creep up in the shadow of the ruins," said Vernon. "They will be sure to take advantage of the superstitious attaching to the Monk's Walk. None of the abbey servants ever venture in that portion of the abbey grounds; consequently Miss Stair would be apt to have her son brought to her by that route. Watch the Monk's Walk, Gannard. As to the disposition to be made of the child, if you gain possession of him, I shall have to leave that to you. I know of no place in which to conceal him. I leave everything in your hands."

And with this disposition of affairs, so comfortable for himself, Vernon went up to Sir Mark's rooms. He was denied admittance as before, and proceeded to solace himself with supper and cigars, retiring to his bedroom about midnight.

An hour after that Gannard returned home unsuccessful. He had watched in the Monk's Walk at the abbey, seeing no one and hearing no one. Juliette's little son had not had his usual airing that evening in the arms of his nurse.

Sir Mark's condition underwent no apparent change during the next day, nor the days that followed.

Two or three weeks thus passed. Sir Mark was supposed to be dying slowly. The Langworth physician visited him daily. The Trebasil practitioner spent half his days and nights in Sir Mark's chamber. Pendants and the nurse went in and out in list slippers, silent and solemn as ghosts.

In truth, Sir Mark was very ill. His physical strength did not return to him, although his mind had never been clearer. Believing his own wife—that wife whom even now he loved and loved to madness—to have sought his death by poison, in order to secure her own freedom to marry whom she would, he preferred death to life. He was tempted, at times, to send a secret message to Juliette, informing her that he knew all her wickedness; but he resolved to keep silent until he should meet her again face to face.

"There shall be a last interview between us," he said to himself, grimly, "and then she and I will part for ever."

Meanwhile things were prospering with Vernon.

It was true that Gannard had not succeeded in his designs against Juliette's infant son. Gannard had summoned his half-sister down from London, and she was stopping at Langworth, ready to carry out his purposes.

"I have made a mistake," said Gannard, addressing his master about dusk of the same day upon which had occurred the brief conversation between Sir Mark and his valet. "I visit the abbey grounds at too late an hour."

"I wonder we didn't think of that before," said Vernon. "We have lost these weeks by your mistake. It's my good fortune that Sir Mark hasn't dropped off before our plan were all matured."

"My sister is already on her way to the Monk's Walk at the abbey," said Gannard. "I told her last night to arrive there at dusk instead of later. She may be awaiting me there now. I shall go immediately. Twice I have entered the Monk's Walk in time to see the nurse disappear within the ruins. Last night I saw her. To-night I shall be in time."

"I will go with you," said Vernon. "Or rather I will slip out of the castle unseen and follow you. To-night we must achieve something, or confess ourselves inadequate. You have searched the town of Langworth, the village of Trebasil, and found no clue to the nurse and child. I shall begin to think that we are beaten—and by a woman, unless we do something to-night."

Gannard assented, and hurried away upon his unfatigable errand.

A few minutes later Vernon secretly followed him.

He threaded the abbey park and came almost silently into the dense shadow of the Monk's Walk. He halted and leaned against a giant trunk, listening and peering.

Suddenly the sound of gentle footfalls smote his excited hearing. And then among the shadows, approaching him, moved a deeper shadow—the figure of a woman with a child in her arms!

To be continued.

TREVYLIAN;

ENTOMBED—A LIVE.

CHAPTER XXV.

REGINALD left the railway carriage and was almost immediately followed by Sir Ralph, notwithstanding the entreaties of the lady and gentlemen, who begged him not to expose himself to what they considered the ungrateful malice of the young man.

"That's capital," said Sir Ralph, speaking to himself, as soon as he left the carriage. "I know the cur would not answer too soon. I'll not put myself in his way alone—he would be more than a match for me—but when I have another opportunity of giving him a castigation in words before people he'll have another dish of his own indignation. I must visit my friend Captain Harry Neville, Esq., and put him up to elaining him as his dear son; and, faith, I'll back him up. I wonder how he proposes to support Mistress Ethel Anselmy. I hope some day to hear of him throwing himself into the Thames, after his precious mother. 'Ho, ho!' chuckled he, 'it would be rare fun after all if Mistress Ethel were glad to come to terms—to become Lady Trevylian. Most men wouldn't take her, but I would. She has the prettiest face I ever saw, and if he were dead, and she in the jaws of poverty for a while, under the supervision of her father-in-law, Captain Harry Neville, Esquire, she'd be precious glad to get back to a gentleman and Trevylian Castle.'"

Talking thus to himself, he passed the ticket office, where, seeing his late adopted son, he turned aside, and entered the hotel, where he ordered dinner, resolving not to pursue his journey for the present.

In order to avoid further contact with Sir Ralph, Reginald determined to wait for the next train, and, inquiring of the ticket clerk, was told that it would be on in about an hour.

"Here's a man," said the ticket clerk, addressing Sir Reginald, "who wishes to dispose of a pair of curious pistols he found when he was in the Crimea. If I was a gentleman I would buy them; he only asks a guinea for them."

Sir Reginald took the pistols from the man and examined them. They were very beautifully inscribed with silver, and, to his astonishment, he found they were marked by the crest of the Ramonski family.

"They are worth more than a guinea," said he to the man who wished to sell them.

"I darsay they are, sir," was the reply, "but, you see, I got them for nothing, and I want the guinea, and I don't want them, and I've been trying

to sell them for a long while, and could find no one to buy them."

"I shall buy them, then," replied Sir Reginald, "and give you two guineas for them, they are worth more than that. I do not want them myself, but I have a friend who will be pleased to get them. Are they primed?"

"Yes, sir."

"They are strange things to handle. Show me how you use them."

"Look here, sir; you just hold it so, and press your finger here."

"I see; they are easy enough to work, certainly."

"Yes, sir; very simple when you know how to use them."

"There are your two guineas."

"Thank you, sir."

Sir Reginald left the ticket office, intending to stroll about until the arrival of the next train.

The country was beautifully undulating, with abundance of woods in clumps within a short distance of the railway station, a deep and rapid brook running down from the hills, with the old coach-road lined on either side by oaks and beeches, winding out and in until it was lost among the wooded hills in the distance.

As Sir Reginald strolled along, almost envying the peaceful dwellers among these beautiful hills and dales, he was startled by several loud cries, uttered in a childish voice.

He turned in the direction from which the voice came, and with horror beheld a rabid dog tearing the clothes off a little girl, not over ten years of age, who was trying to defend herself from his attacks by beating him off with a milk-pail she carried in her hand.

His first impulse was to fire, but a moment's reflection told him that this might be fatal to the child as well as the dog, in the close proximity in which they stood to each other. Taking aim at the dog's head, he hurled one of his newly purchased pistols with such precision that in a second the animal fell gasping to the ground.

The little girl, finding her dress released from the grasp of the dog's teeth, ran off with all speed, not stopping for an instant, evidently thinking that the dog would be in pursuit of her if she did not make the best of her time.

Reginald now made the best of his way to the scene of action, that he might recover the pistol.

The dog lay gasping in death, but not dead, and lest he should revive and do more mischief Reginald carried him to the brook, which was quite near, and threw him into a deep pool formed by the water collecting between some large stones and the larger roots of a willow.

In lifting up the dog he took hold of him by the hind legs, not observing until many hours afterwards that the blood from the wounded dog had soiled his trousers.

He then returned to the half-crepe in which the dog had been killed, and made a search for the pistol. His search was in vain—no pistol was to be seen in any direction.

Tired out with his fruitless search, he at length came to the conclusion that while he was gone with the dog to the pool in the brook some passer-by had picked up the pistol.

He now looked at his watch, and finding it was still early he determined to walk to the next station, and then take the train, going by the second-class and thus avoid all chance of again encountering Sir Ralph Trevylian.

At last the railway was gained. In a short time the swift train brought him to the great city he sought, with its mass of suffering humanity, their hopes and fears.

His heart beat fast as he stood before the door of the house in Cecil Street.

The next moment he was folded in the Countess Ramonski's arms, while for the first time he heard himself addressed in tones dictated by a mother's love:

"My son! My son!"

She needed no confirmation now of the fact that Reginald Trevylian was her son, her very son. Now that the scales had fallen from her eyes it told itself in every motion of his head, every movement of his face. The Neville hand, the Neville eye, spoke in stronger language than any marks or spoken words ever could.

She questioned him of the past, how it was possible that Ralph Trevylian could have put him in the dungeon when he himself did not return until six days after the memorable night of the party at Warsaw Castle, the time of his own disappearance.

"Dear mother," was his reply, "do not question me on this subject at present, one day I shall tell you all. I have a sad and sinful page in my own life to turn over before I can explain how Ralph Trevylian

had the power to make me a prisoner. Twelve years before, when I was only a boy, he tried to imprison me in that dungeon, that my youth and manhood might be wasted in sighs and groans. If the boy had possessed the moral courage of the man I would have fled from his castle then. It was no home; I hated both him and it. I will tell you all again. Now we must talk of what more immediately concerns us both—the sailor, Neville, who claims you for his wife.

The countess's cheek grew pale as when, but she uttered no word.

"Is it not more likely, my dearest mother, that this coarse man is an impostor than that years could have changed a gentleman into the common, low man, low in all his proclivities, that this man should himself do so? We must it appears that in some way the man has acquired a certain knowledge of the times my father and you spent together, perhaps from servants, and this, joined to a striking likeness, emboldened him to present himself to you as your husband with the view of extorting money."

"Alas! no," replied Eugénie; "I have thought the matter over in all its phases. I know him the moment I saw him at the garden rail, although an instant previous I had believed him sleeping under the sea for more than twenty years. Besides, he could not have gained his knowledge of my home life—of all the circumstances which passed, such as his having brought me his last full of rose leaves, his filling his pocket with worn-out violets? He also showed me the half of an old Spanish gold coin we broke between us in my fifteenth year, a month before I fled with him from Genoa Castle. He told me the words you used when you put this ring on my finger." As she spoke she turned the sapphires to the light, making it blaze in diverging rays. "I have two ill-sorted letters he wrote to me on board the 'Sphinx,' which are filled with reminiscences of our early married days—little things no one could have told him. Alas! no; I have no hope on earth now but the conviction I can draw from your own love."

He put his arm round her as he sat by her on the sofa, and, pressing his lips to her cheek, said, softly: "I will make a home for you, where, with Ethel and myself, you will yet be happy, if better cannot be; but I must first assure myself that this sailor-man is what he pretends to be."

A tap at the door, and the servant came in to say that the shopman from the bookseller's wished to see Mrs. Gerald.

"Oh, I am so sorry!" exclaimed the countess, as she glanced at the clock on the mantelpiece. "I promised to finish a drawing by half-past four, and in my joy at seeing you I forgot all about it. Send the young man up here," said she, addressing the servant.

The man made his appearance in a few seconds.

"I am very sorry that, owing to the arrival of my son, I forgot all about the drawing. I have not half an hour's work to do on it. If you can wait until five I will finish it by that time."

"Yes, I can wait, and it will be in good time at five o'clock. The gentleman whom it is for will not call for it until six; but as you said it would be finished at half-past four I came for it."

The countess was busy arranging her drawing materials when the landlady, having announced herself in a little tap at the door, entered, in full walking costume of a widow's cap, bonnet, and crape shawl.

"I'm just going to take the half-hour before tea to run into the Strand and buy your lustre for you. You gave me two pounds, and that'll buy a good one. Will you have a double skirt, and are you to trim it with itself?"

"Thank you, Mrs. Wardle, it is very kind of you to go out on purpose. I merely wished a plain dress, without double skirt or frill either."

"Oh, then that won't take much of your two pounds. I suppose you will have black waist lining?"

"No, I prefer the colour being white; and pray, Mrs. Wardle, have the materials sent to your own dressmaker."

"I'm going to take a girl into the house to make it for you, madam, a piece of my own," said the good-tempered woman as she bowed herself out with a smile.

The countess now applied herself to her easel, and notwithstanding the interruption of giving Mrs. Wardle orders about the new dress the drawing was finished and delivered into the young man's hands as the clock struck five.

The countess received a sealed envelope from the shopman in return for the drawing, opening which she took out five guineas.

"There," said she, showing the money to her son. "My landlady has been the means of procuring employment for me in an art which has ever been

one of my favourite pursuits. I can make five guineas nearly every week."

"Dear mother," he replied, his face showing the pain it gave him to see his mother reduced to labour for her own support, "I trust the day is not far distant when we will all live under the one roof, and that I, not you, will be the worker."

Mrs. Wardle returned by a little after five, displaying what she called "a real bargain"—a lustre worth three shillings she had purchased for two and sixpence a yard.

Their early tea over, the mother and son sat talking of "a thousand things."

The evening seemed only beginning when the clock striking eight warned them both that the hour had arrived they had agreed upon would be the best for paying a visit to Jim Skelton's lodger.

Certain as he was that no one but he knew could possibly see and recognise him, yet it was with a feeling very nearly allied to shame that Reginald Trevylian entered Jim Skelton's bedroom.

It was evidently one of the lowest of its class, and the blindest-looking large man who stood behind the dirty bar gave evidence by his whole appearance, from his pimpled, swollen, red nose down to his dirty hands and loosely hanging trousers, above the waistband of which a red worsted strip protruded, that he was one of his own best customers.

"Do you know a person of that name?" inquired Reginald, throwing down the dirty, coarse card he had received from Lovell.

The man lifted the card and read the words: "Captain Henry Neville, Esquire," in a slow, hesitating manner, as if unaccustomed to use his eyes in that way.

"That'll be the skipper, I reckon," said he, looking up with evident surprise in the stranger's face, who he now noticed was a gentleman and not a customer, as he had at first mistaken him for.

"The what?"

"The skipper; we allers calls him the skipper, 'cause he's in the water'n' line." "Looking in Sir Reginald's face he said: "You'll be his brother's son be-like. I've heard him say as how he had a brother down in Yorkshire, who was well to do and lived like a gentleman."

"I am not his brother's son," was the reply, given, in spite of himself, in rather an indignant tone.

"Then, faith, if ye're not his brother's son, ye beas his own, for aich has hexat likeness to the old salt himself I never seed."

Reginald's heart sickened as the man spoke. It seemed that even already he was realising the truth of his mother's words.

"Does the skipper, as you call him, live here?"

"In course he lives here when he's ashore. Where ud he live? He's in yonder vi' three-o' his friends, all playing catch the ten, like good uns."

As the man spoke he pointed with his thumb, which he turned back towards a half glass door, not far from the bar, through which could be seen four men seated round a table playing cards, each provided with a tumbler of liquor, from which he occasionally took a mouthful.

They all seemed to be in hearty good humour, now and then as one made a lucky trick the fortunate one beating the floor and laughing uproariously to express the satisfaction he felt.

Reginald looked towards this scene of low mirth with dismay.

"Ye can go in if ye like," said the bar-keeper, "only the skipper don't care to be spoken to at his game, 'pecially when he's playin' for shiners."

"I'll not disturb him just now, but if you'll allow me, I'll just go and look through the glass window. I'm not sure if it is the man whom I want that you speak of as the skipper."

"Set yer mind easy on that score," replied the man, with a ludicrous twinkle of his eye, as if he knew the gentleman was ashamed of his coarse relation whom he had come to seek.

"I won't disturb them by looking through the door?"

"No fear o' that; they'll never notice ye if ye was the Prince of Wales, let alone his own nephay; they're well used to the customers lookin' at them."

Reginald walked up to the glass window and stood there for some minutes, his heart beating almost audibly. He did not need to be told which of the men he sought; the face he had come to see was full before him—now looking at the cards he held in his hand, again raising his head with a pleased look of good-humoured triumph at his opponent, every lineament of his face telling plainly to the young man's eye that he had found his father.

It was impossible there could be any mistake, his own face was there before him as surely as ever he had seen it in the glass!

True, it was an older face, sunburned and weather-

beaten, but no less truly the prototype of his own, just such as his own might be twenty years hence, should his life be spent in a similar manner.

The longer he remained looking at the man, the more varied the expression of his face, the more certain he became that the coarse man who stamped and laughed, and rubbed his large, brown, toil-stained hands to express his mirth, was his father.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WITH beating heart Reginald again sought the vicinity of the bar.

"What ails ye? Are ye ill?" asked the man.

"Take a nip; it'll do ye good."

So saying, he pushed a glass decanter, half-full of gin, towards Reginald, pointing significantly to a tray with glasses within reach.

"No, thank you, I'm quite well; I don't need it."

"Your face is as white as a new-made sail, and ye look fit like a half-drowned rat. Don't be afraid, it'll cost ye nothin'; the skipper's payin' up square enough. His last cruise was better than a whalin' voyage. He larks out the shiners like flint."

Reginald again excused himself, and, looking round, asked if there was any place he could go to rest in while he waited for the end of the game.

"In course, ye can go up to the skipper's cabin; it's aloft there," said the man, pointing as he spoke to a staircase at the other end of the shop.

Reginald ascended the rickety, dirty staircase, and at once found himself in a small room, into which the staircase led.

It was quite as keeping with the shop below—a dirty, old, faded carpet, with a piece of sail-cloth doing duty as a ground cloth, partly covered the workmen's boards which formed the floor; a curtained bed in one corner, the quilt of which seemed as if it was last washed the day Noah came out from the ark; faded and worned window curtains, a foot too short for the low windows they were meant to adorn; various coats and trousers hung on the wall, which did duty as a wardrobe; an old chest of drawers, minus several of the handles, on which was placed a looking-glass, old and spotted; an old clothes brush, and a broken hair comb; a few rickety chairs, and a square table, without a cloth, formed the furniture and appointments of the apartment—the whole smelling strongly of tobacco smoke and gin.

"Won't ye take a drop o' somethin' hot? It'll do ye good."

Reginald started as the bar-keeper's voice fell on his ear.

The man was without shoes, the coarse gray stockings which alone covered his feet being in perfect keeping with the rest of his style of dress, his shoeless feet enabling him to enter the room without noise.

"No, thank you," was Reginald's reply to his offer of something hot. "I am quite well. I do not need anything. But tell me this, is it here, where the skipper's wife lives?"

His only remaining hope was that the man was married, as he alleged he was. If so, something might be made of that, at least as far as to prevent his troubling his mother, should he discover she was still alive.

"His wife live here?" repeated the bar-keeper, in tones of surprise. "Ye didn't know what happened. She's dead—drowned in the river—fell over a balcony at the foot of Cecil Street, the first night he took her home. The old 'un was terribly cut up about it, an' no wonder. She was worth a mint o' money, an' he'll never touch a copper o's now she's gone. But, as I can understand, he got a jolly good haul out o' her afore she went to Davy Jones's, besides a watch that you never saw the like o' only in shop windows. Man alive, the chain cost more'n you'd believe. The old 'un keeps 'em both safe in the locker there," he added, pointing as he spoke to a strong-looking sea-chest, fastened by an iron hasp and large padlock, "an' I'm so feared about 'em I never lets on to our customers sich things as is in the 'ouse."

The voice of a customer was heard from below, and the bar-keeper swung himself down the rickety staircase as quietly as he had come up.

The last hope, then, was gone. The man's marriage was, as Reginald had feared, a pure invention.

Reginald Trevylian looked around, with a feeling akin to dismay, upon the room where his father spent at least his nights while on shore. If he had been given his choice at that moment it is probable he would have chosen Sir Ralph Trevylian, with all his tyranny and injustice, rather than the man he was forced to acknowledge as his father whether he would or not.

On the mantelpiece was a tallow candle in a short brass candlestick, the long black wick from which hung to one side, making the tallow stream down and fall guttering on the bottom of the candlestick and mantelpiece.



[LOOKING AT THE SKIPPER.]

Looking at the guttering candle, he observed above it a brassy-looking lacquered frame, which contained instead of a picture a sheet of paper, on which were some lines of writing and a large red seal.

Upon going near enough to see what the writing meant he found it was a letter from the Prussian government, to which the royal seal was attached, thanking Lieutenant Harry Neville for his gallant conduct in saving, by his sole exertions, twenty Prussian emigrants who would have found a watery grave but for him.

The paper bore a date twenty-four years back.

This was a drop of comfort amid a sea of trouble. The man who could thus risk his life to save others must at least be brave and generous.

He read the paper twice over, and then turning round, observed a desk on the table, which he had overlooked in his first hasty glance over the room.

The desk was handsome, brass-mounted, and showy-looking. A brass plate on the top bore the name "Lieutenant Harry Neville."

There was no use seeking for farther confirmation of the fact he was so anxious to deny. No evidence could be stronger. The coarse, low sailor-man was his father! And, worst of all, he was the husband of the highly born, highly bred, loving woman whom, for the first time he could remember to have used the word, he had to-day called his mother.

He was the man whom this refined lady was bound by every tie, by her own solemn vow, to honour and obey, until death did them part!

Sick at heart he was about to descend the staircase and return to his mother in Cecil Street. There was no use remaining there longer. Were he to live a hundred years he could never know more clearly than he did at that moment what he had come to ascertain.

His foot was on the first step of the staircase, when suddenly a sound of uproarious quarrelling struck on his ear. Horrible oaths and gross, obscene language were intermingled with the noise of scuffling and blows.

The disputants were evidently in the shop, the owner of which was vainly endeavouring to make them go out to the street to finish out their quarrel, then threatening to call the police if they did not instantly depart.

No attention seemed to be paid to the words, and, fearful that the man might put his threat into execution, Reginald descended the staircase, determined to risk passing through the posse of drunken men rather than be found in such a place by the officers of the law.

On going through the shop, he found that the most

uproarious and blasphemous voice he had heard belonged to the man he must perforce believe to be his father, who, with bleeding face and clenched fists, was kneeling on the body of one of his boon companions, whose head and breast he was pummeling, at the same time resisting with all his might the efforts of two others, who were trying to drag him off the body of his prostrate foe.

Reginald Trevillian darted from the disgusting and horrifying scene with all the haste his limbs were capable of, and throwing himself into a cab, desired the man to drive to the upper end of the Strand.

He tried to arrange his ideas so as to enable him to tell his mother the terrible truth in the gentlest way possible. He had set himself no easy task. He was convinced by all he had seen and heard that the man was not married, never had a wife, except his own poor mother. This part of his tale was a falsehood. Were it otherwise there would have been some little ray of light amid the darkness.

But as it was his beautiful mother had nothing to look forward to, as far as this world goes, but a wildly beating heart, a life of unrest for evermore!

On entering his mother's parlour he clasped her in his strong arms, as if by so doing he could more powerfully than by words assure her of his love and protection. He saw that she anticipated what his words were to be, and this made his sad tale more easily told.

"Dear mother," he began, "your conviction was but too well founded. The man whom I have seen to-night is my father. His face tells it at a glance. His chest, with his name as a lieutenant in the navy, is in his room. A complimentary letter, embellished with the royal seal of Prussia, is hung on the wall. The man is low and coarse, and all that we can do is to avoid him by every means in our power. If he need aid in his old age he shall have it. Let us try until then to banish him from our thoughts."

Poor Eugenie, almost unconsciously, had been clinging to a floating straw. Her son had spoken so confidently of Neville's being an impostor that against her own conviction she was hoping that in some unaccountable way he would be right—Neville would be a nightmare of the past, and she would be Adolph Ramouski's most blessed wife again.

The awaking from her day-dream was sad enough, and although she tried to hide what she felt her son saw but too plainly that the white face and trembling hands came from a new pang in the fluttering heart.

He tried to speak encouragingly to her, spoke of a government situation he expected to obtain in the

West Indies, where she would accompany Ethel and himself, and try to forget the past.

Miserable comfort! Where Adolph Ramouski was there was her heaven, as far as this earth went, and home or happiness without him could not be.

The servant entered with a telegram. It was from Lovell, and written by Count Ramouski's desire, to say that Ethel's wound in the shoulder had broken out afresh, and her husband must return by the first train.

In great alarm Reginald handed the telegram to his mother.

It was not yet ten o'clock; by getting a cab at once and driving fast he would be in time to overtake the train, which started at that hour.

"Good-bye, dear mother; take courage, all will yet be well."

He kissed her, and she stood at the window looking after the cab as it bowled along until it was lost to sight.

He was just in time; the whistle sounded as he entered the station. He was almost running in his haste lest he should lose the train when he heard a sharp sound, as if from a hand whistle, almost close to his side, and immediately two policemen came in front of him, barring his progress to the train.

f He was about to demand the meaning of such conduct when a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder and an authoritative voice said:

"In the queen's name, you are my prisoner!"

"What do you mean, fellow?" Reginald called out, in an angry voice. "Unhand me instantly. Do you know who I am?"

"You call yourself Reginald Trevillian," was the answer, given in cool, calm tones, "and you are arrested at the instance of the queen for the murder of Sir Ralph Trevillian!"

"Sir Ralph Trevillian murdered!" exclaimed the young man, in accents of horror and surprise. "Impossible! I left him at twelve o'clock to-day alive and well."

"You mean that you saw him then alive and well, but you forget that you shot him before you left by the half-past five o'clock train, and that you threw away the pistol you bought at the station to murder him with. The pistol is found, and the gentleman himself was able to tell who did the deed, so every port-hole is shut against you. Come," said the detective, "jump into the cab; you'll sleep in Newgate to-night. It would be a good job for the country if all such rogues as you were as speedily brought to justice."

(To be continued.)



[TIMELY HELP.]

HARD AS OAK.

BY
J. E. MUDDOCK.

CHAPTER XIV.

A world of earthly blessings to my soul
If sympathy of love unites our thoughts.

Shakespeare.

NEARLY three-quarters of an hour passed before the woman reappeared and, asking Robert to follow her, conducted him into another room, dingy and dusty and frowzy, but rendered cheerful as far as it could be by a blazing fire. Stretched on a sofa before this fire and swathed in blankets and wrappers was the invalid. Her splendid and luxurious hair was unfettered, and though her face was very pale and the brightness of the clear, deep eyes slightly dimmed, Robert thought that she looked more beautiful and interesting than ever.

"Why, Mr. Ainsleigh," she exclaimed, in a voice that told she had suffered much, and holding out her left hand for him to shake, "whatever has brought you here?"

"I have come to see you," he answered, taking the outstretched hand and retaining it, warm and soft and white as it was, in his own.

"Of course you have come to see me or you would not be here," she said, trying to force a little smile, but the trial was a failure, for it was evident she was suffering pain. "But that is not the sole object of your visit to this outlandish place?"

"My sole object? I have come from London purposely to see you."

He still retained his hold of her hand and with his other drew up a chair that stood near and seated himself beside her. And in so doing he failed to notice the warm glow that spread over the pale face as he uttered the words.

"Indeed, Mr. Ainsleigh. That is not only exceedingly kind but rather strange, is it not?" she asked, slightly confused, or perhaps more astonished. "I really didn't think anybody would have taken so much interest in me."

"It is not fair to yourself to say so, Miss Holmwood. But let me state briefly that I am here with the knowledge and by the full consent of your mamma."

"Indeed!" she uttered, in genuine surprise. "Why?"

"Because your mamma was terribly grieved to know that you were ill and alone."

"Grieved that I was ill? How did she know that?"

"Through Rubini."

"Did he write to her?"

"No. He called."

"The villain!" she muttered.

"I am glad to hear that that is your opinion. It has been mine from the first moment that I saw him. But you must not excite yourself now," and he placed his fingers on her pulse, and after a pause said: "You are feverish and very weak. Great Heavens!" he exclaimed, as he observed for the first time, owing to the shifting of the blankets, that her right arm was swathed in bandages, "what is the matter with your arm?"

"It is broken," she answered, languidly.

"Broken!" he repeated, as he tenderly and skillfully passed his fingers along the injured limb. "Why, you have no splints upon it, and it has not been properly set."

"No," was the only answer.

"Surely Rubini has never been so brutal as not to procure you proper medical advice?"

"He brought some man here, who pretended to set my arm and bandaged it up. He also gave me a bottle of medicine, but I am certain it has made me a great deal worse."

"Have you any of the medicine left?" he asked, a suspicion that he dared not give words to crossing his mind.

"No. I took the last dose this morning."

"I am sorry for that. Where is the bottle?"

"There," pointing to a small side table as she spoke.

It was an ordinary medicine bottle, but there was no label upon it.

As he held it up to the light he noticed that it still contained a few drops of a colourless liquid, which he proved had a faint, sickly smell.

"I will take this bottle away with me when I go," he said, putting it inside of his hat, which stood on the table. "But how is it you did not take means of communicating with your mamma?"

"Because I had no desire to alarm her. Besides, she has troubles enough of her own without troubling about mine."

"My dear girl, it is wrong of you to talk that way. Your mamma is the best friend you have in the world, and it was a duty you owed to her to have sent word to her immediately."

"Perhaps it was. But you know I pride myself upon being unyielding and as hard as oak. As I have made my bed I must lie upon it. It was my own desire to join this company, and I mustn't quarrel with my lot!"

"But that is not true philosophy. We are all apt

to make mistakes. And it is better to confess our errors and try and repair any mischief that may have resulted. However time present must not be wasted in words. You must allow me to dress that arm for you. But, first, what is the nature of your injuries?"

"I think the principal one is the fracture. My back is much bruised, and I am greatly shaken."

"How did the accident happen?"

"It was in the last scene of Faust; during the apotheosis of Marguerite, where she is being carried to heaven by angels. I was one of the angels, and was strapped to an iron. The strap broke and I fell to the stage."

"But was it not carelessness on somebody's part that such a weak strap should have been used?"

"Not carelessness, but maliciousness. The strap had been wilfully cut."

"Wilfully cut? By whom?" cried Robert, scarcely able to restrain his indignation.

"By Rubini."

"This is a matter for a magistrate," said Robert, his blood boiling at the thought that the villain should have been guilty of such an outrage.

"No. To make the affair public would be useless. I have no proof but my bare statement against his and his wife's. Better to say nothing about it at present. I will tell you more possibly on a future occasion."

Robert saw the force of the argument, and refrained from any farther questioning on the subject. Then, for the invalid was very faint and weak, his first duty was to try and alleviate her sufferings.

"I will leave you for a little time," he said, "for I must try and get some splints and set your arm. We must then make preparations for your early journey back to London."

"My journey back to London? I do not intend to return."

"Oh, nonsense. I am here on purpose to take you back."

"But that cannot be. Were I ever so willing myself the Rubini's would not let me go."

"Whatever objections they may raise I think I may safely say I will overcome them. But you must promise me that you will return."

He paused, waiting for her answer, but she made none.

She had closed her eyes, as if turning something over in her mind.

"You will promise, will you not?" he said, again.

"I cannot return," she answered, in a low tone.

"Do not say you cannot. You must for my sake."

"For your sake!" she exclaimed, opening her

eyes and looking at him with surprise. "You seem to take a great interest in me, Mr. Ainsleigh."

"I do take a great interest in you, and wish—"

"And wish what?" she asked, as he paused and did not seem inclined to finish the sentence.

"I wish that I could see you in a happier position."

She sighed and closed her eyes again, as if into her young life there had already come some great sorrow.

He was not slow to observe this and remarked: "Surely the profession has no real attraction for you?"

"No. I hate it. It is a wicked, horrible profession."

"I am glad to hear you say so. Then it cannot be from love for the Radium that you desire to stay?"

"No. I—I positively hate them!"

"Then you must let me take you back?"

"Why?"

"Because I wish it."

"You wish it?"

"Yes. You must go back to please me."

"If it is to please you I will go."

"Thank you. I must try and get you better, and make you happier."

"You may do the former, I fear you will not do the latter."

There was a strange meaning in her words. He noticed that, but was puzzled to define what the meaning was.

"If it is in my power, if any act of mine can make you happier you have only to command me."

"You are very, very good. Nobody has ever been so kind to me before. It may be in your power, but I cannot command you. I have no right to do that."

"But I give you the right."

"Ah!" she sighed, "we will see. I am faint now, and my arm is very painful."

"Really you must forgive me for making you talk so, I was so interested in your conversation."

A slight smile wreathed itself around her mouth as she made answer and said:

"I am so glad I interest you."

He was strongly tempted to raise that delicate white hand, which looked so dainty as it laid upon the blanket, to his lips and kiss it, but he overcame the temptation. As he went down those many flights of stone steps, almost unconsciously, and with his heart beating wildly, he still believed that he was acting on the broadest principles of humanity, nothing more.

Foolish fellow.

CHAPTER IV.

Pardon what I have spoke,
For 'tis a studied, not a present thought,
By duty vnnituted. *Shakespeare.*

In this world of shifting cares, of casual sunshine, and of heavy shadow, it almost seems self-ill-luck—if such a term is admissible—when once it fastens on a person, even if the hold be ever so insecure at first, clings with awful tenacity, and throws feeler after feeler around its victim, sucking away all his joy and happiness, depriving his heart of warmth and his soul of light, until the life that is left is so perverted that the awful silence of the grave is preferable.

It is also a curious fact, for those who are opposed to the doctrine of pre-ordination to dwell upon, that circumstances of apparently the most trivial nature bring about the most extraordinary and unlooked-for events, events that form, as it were, link by link, a great chain which serves to lead a person into a course diametrically opposed to that which is setting out on the journey of life he was intended to take. If it be true that "Facilis desensus Avernus," that

Avernus' gates are open night and day,
Smooth the descent and easy is the way;
But to return to Heaven's pure light again
This is a work of labour and of pain;

it is none the less true that the descent from the brightness to the darkness of life is equally easy.

At the time that Robert Ainsleigh was drinking in delicious, producing draughts of floating happiness in the presence of his charming patient, a scene of a far different nature was taking place at Ainsleigh Hall.

Stephen had so far recovered from his attack of illness that he was able to sit up in his library and attend to some of his correspondence.

On the morning in question his faithful lady house-keeper and companion, Miss Whimple, was seated with him. Stephen had requested her presence on urgent business, and it was evident from the look of care and anxiety which rested on his usually kind and genial face that he attached great importance to the matter in hand.

"I have sent for you, Miss Whimple," he began, as that lady arranged her skirts and comfortably seated herself on a luxuriously cushioned chair, for she knew from past experience that Stephen Ainsleigh's important matters generally took a long while to get through, and if there was anything he disliked it was for a person to whom he was talking to rush and flit in the chair—a reproachable practice at all times and in all persons. "I have sent for you that we may confer upon a very important subject—I may say a painful subject, since it deals with the disobedience of the boy when I have coincided with more than parental feelings. You are aware that I despised Robert?"

"Mr. Ainsleigh spoke very much as though he imagined himself to be a heaven-appointed destiny-master to his own children. Perhaps he did; certainly he would not have been singular in this regard, for thousands of parents labour under that delusion, without recognising that it is their sacred duty as to fathers and train their offspring that they may be prepared to cheerfully and willingly face what the future may bring, be it rough or smooth."

"To become the husband of Ethel Hetheridge. This was not only the wish of my own heart, but the wish of my dear and valued friend, Bartram Hetheridge. And I have seen our common, I may say, togetherness. We have met in the House for years, and on an occasion have we even differed, though Hetheridge is violent in his politics. When our children were in the cradle he used to say to me, 'Stephen, my boy, when that youngster of yours has out his wisdom teeth he shall make my girl a husband.' You will therefore understand, Miss Whimple, how heavily I find this disappointment."

"I not only understand but share it with you, Mr. Ainsleigh," Miss Whimple pathetically remarked. "But even the disappointment would be less terrible if it were not for the fact that the child is so young, and so full of life and vigour. A child's words should be taken very seriously, and the fact that it is a child's word should be taken very seriously. I have tried to inculcate in my children from their earliest infancy."

One of Mr. Ainsleigh's weaknesses might be said to be a common one, since so many parents labour under it, and that was that he failed to recognize his children as men and women. Once a child always a child; forgetting that through the various stages of childhood, youth and manhood, a gradation of treatment is imperatively necessary with reference to the thoughts, feelings, prejudices and idiosyncrasies.

Life with Robert was a man—a man by moral and legal right—in the very first flush of manhood, was true, but none the less on the threshold of those years that should for a well-cultured mind contain maturity of judgment. But the father failed to recognize this.

"However terrible his conduct may appear to me," Stephen went on, "I cannot but think much of it is due to a boyish waywardness, which may yield to treatment; that if it is to himself for a while he may repent of his folly. I have ordered him to leave the house in a week, and he must go, for I cannot break my word. Still he is my child, you know, after all, and I—I cannot bear to drive him out, as it were, penniless, so I have filled in a cheque to his order for three hundred pounds."

Mr. Ainsleigh exhibited a good deal of tenderness as he said this, and proved that the father's heart was still more powerful than the iron rule of discipline.

"The sum is sufficiently large to keep the lad independent for a time, and his sense of honour, I am proud to say, is too strong to permit of him going astray. I want you, Miss Whimple, to hand this cheque to him, and take advantage of the occasion to admonish him for his error. And try if you cannot wean him to my wishes. You know a woman's persuasive influence is often very much more powerful than a man's. I should like you to do this to-day, or he may be binding himself to some arrangements that it would be difficult to suddenly alter."

"I very much fear that he has already done that."

"Nonsense, nonsense! That could not be, without he has been deceiving me, and I dare not think that a son of mine was capable of deception."

"Terrible as it is for me, having loved the boy with all a mother's love, to utter it, I must for the honour of your name speak the truth; I fear that Robert has been guilty of deception."

"Deception!" echoed his listener, while his fingers nervously grasped at the papers on his desk, and into his face came that purplish tinge again. "Deception, no, you are wrong. A false impression, a mistake."

"Would to Heaven it were. But the heaviest sorrow that ever I have known is having to utter these words. My duty to you, however, compels me, even though my heart breaks in the telling. I claim for myself high-born ancestors; in my veins runs patrician

blood. And it is maddening for me to see the boy that I love as if he were really my son descending so low in the social scale, going down to the very dregs of plebeianism; forgetting his high estate, to grovel in the gutter."

"What do you mean?" gasped Stephen Ainsleigh, his voice thick and husky, as though a great ball had stuck in his throat. "Dare you what you say. For, unless you have indisputable proof, even your long years of faithful servitude shall not save you from my wrath."

"I can forgive your threats—though at any other time I should have regarded them as discourteous and unbecomingly—because I know your heart is wrong. Had it not been in possession of such proof I would have suffered death before I had spoken."

"This is terrible, this is terrible!" groaned the unhappy father. "But let me hear the worst quickly." He passed his hand over and round his head, as though trying to remove a weight, and the stage in his face grew darker and his eyelids dropped as if with sorrow.

"Content nothing from me," he continued. "Deep wounds do not pain so much as lower ones."

It was terrible to see the strong man writhing with this new sorrow, and it was still more terrible to see the disappointed father of this woman was unconsciously weeping. The curse of gods was strong upon her, and by common silence she was forcibly tearing out of her heart the love she had borne her mother's son. And this because, with the impetuosity peculiar to women, who, with rare exceptions, jump to hasty conclusions, she believed she had discovered indisputable proof that he had deeply wronged and deceived his father and unobtrusively deceived her, when he had told her that he knew nothing about Miss Hetheridge.

"I am afraid that the wound I must give you will be very deep indeed," she said, in answer to Stephen's last remark. "But I should be wanting in that duty I owe to you if I did not acquaint you with the facts I have gathered. There is a cause other than that stated by him why Robert has refused to marry Miss Hetheridge."

"Yes, yes—what is it?" cried Stephen, in a half-dazed kind of manner, for he was ill, very ill again, but Miss Whimple saw it not.

"There is another woman in the question."

"It is false!" exclaimed her listener, with unusual warmth. "I repeat that it is false. I put the question to the boy, but he denied it—denied it, Miss Whimple, and a child of mine dares not tell a falsehood."

Miss Whimple was hurt. She had been over thirty years in his service, and he had never spoken to her before in such a manner.

"I emphatically assert that it is true."

"Then let Robert come here, so that he may hear what you have to say."

"He is not in the house."

"We will wait then until he returns."

"I fear that he will not return."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that he is not in London."

"Where is he?"

"In Scotland."

"In Scotland?"

"Yes. He has gone to see this woman."

"But where are your proofs?"

Mr. Ainsleigh was strangely agitated. And if Miss Whimple had not been blinded by what to her was passion, and if her feelings had not been so wounded she would have been alarmed at the sight of the face before her. One of Stephen's hands was passing nervously backwards and forwards amongst the iron-gray hair of his head, and now and again the hand made a movement as if trying to knock something from the top of his head, as though a great weight was resting there.

The information she was conveying was singularly ill-timed, for the attack of blood to the brain from which he was scarcely convalescent had been of a dangerous nature. At any other moment, that is when in his usual state of health, he would have listened to her with the resignation of a philosopher. But now—now, Heaven help him!

"I have the proofs in his own words," she went on. "The same evening that he quarrelled with you he came to me and related what had passed between you. In his own, as well as in your interest, I felt that I was justified in questioning him as to the real motives which had actuated him in his determined refusal to meet your wishes. As a woman, I suspected that a woman was at the bottom of it. I taxed him with this, and elicited that on his last journey to Scotland he had met with a young girl whom he much admired. She travelled with him from London; he saw her subsequently in Edinburgh and again at Perth. He confessed that he was much struck with her and considered her very superior to Miss Hetheridge."

"Ah!"

This from Stephen, but it was more as a gasp for breath than a distinctly uttered word.

"I was particular in asking him if he was still in communication with her, but he denied that he was," continued this pitiless and blind Adrastra. "Judge then of my surprise and pain on learning from him on the following morning that he was going to Scotland immediately."

"But not—must to see her?"

"Yes, to see her. He confessed it. But he stoutly maintained that he had no knowledge of this journey on the previous evening when he had talked with me. After he had left I went into his room and found an open telegraphic message lying on the table, where he had placed and overlooked it in his hurry of starting. That message was from some female in Camden Town. It bore the date of the preceding day, and the hour in which it had been sent out was earlier than when he saw me. I connect that telegram with his journey, and I am convinced in my own mind that that journey was prearranged."

"This is a—terrible revelation," murmured the unhappy father, seemingly quite bewildered by what he had heard.

"It is terrible," answered his torturer. "And I am afraid that the foolish lad, smothering under your just decree, has hurried off in that spirit of revenge, or rather spite, so predominant in young people, determining to brave your anger and set you at defiance."

"But how—how—what—do you—mean? You are enigmatical."

"I thought that I was perfectly clear. My meaning is that he has gone off to marry this girl."

"Marry—marry the girl?"

Mr. Ainsleigh seemed to echo the words as though his reason was all to pieces, and he did not clearly comprehend.

"Yes," pursued the still wrathful housekeeper, driving Heaven knows, unwittingly—shaft after shaft into poor Stephen's heart.

Could she have foreseen the result of her communication, the result to come then, and all the awful sorrow to spring from that in the speaking future, she would have suffered her tongue to have been torn out by its roots ere she had given utterance to a single word.

"Such marriages are unhappily of frequent occurrence, and where they are as ill-assorted as this one must inevitably be, if it take place, nothing but misery and degradation can come from them."

"And this—this—person—woman who has—infatuated him, who and what is she?"

"Some miserable, low-bred girl, of depraved tastes, whose origin is, no doubt, as obscure as she herself is."

"But how know you this?"

"Her very calling convinces me that I am correct."

"Her calling?"

"Yes, she is an actress."

"An actress?"

As her listener echoed the words the light was out of his eyes, and both his hands were hysterically clenching at the mass of gray hair that encircled his broad forehead.

For the first time now she noticed, so that her heart jumped into her mouth, that he was strange—ghastly—ill. She sprang from her seat and caught his hands, and would have spoken, but he pushed her away. And throwing his arms up, with a strange, gurgling sound, he tried to articulate.

"I—I—will—"

His words were cut short.

With a groan, he fell heavily forward on his face. Then the household was alarmed by a wild, piercing shriek that broke from the miserable Miss Whimple, as, falling on her knees beside the prostrate form, she cried:

"Oh, Heaven, forgive me, I have killed him!"

And it was so, for his time had come, and Stephen Ainsleigh was stone dead.

CHAPTER XVI.

The men that buy his hand upon a woman,
Save in the way of kindness, is a wretch
Whom 'twere gross flattery to name onward.

Shakspeare.

WHEN Robert Ainsleigh had procured the articles he required from an apothecary's shop he hurried back to the lodgings of his patient. He found her excited and feverish, and he considered it necessary to administer a soothing draught and wait some hours before attempting to reset the fractured bone.

During that time she got some fitful slumber and as the young doctor watched her his heart ran away with his head, and in spite of the pale face he thought she looked very beautiful, and he wished, actually wished, that he could always take care of her and protect her from danger and evil.

As the day waned the fever left her and she got stronger, and about four in the afternoon she expressed a wish that he would lose no time in setting the limb.

He unbound the bandages, and when the arm was exposed he was shocked to find that the fractured bone, which had already commenced to unite, projected considerably, and that to reduce it to its proper position it would be necessary to break the parts asunder.

"I am very much afraid, Miss Holmwood," he said, "that I shall have to part this false joint and to do so must occasion you some pain."

"Do not fear," she said, "I can bear it."

"I wish that I could bear it for you; how willingly would I do so."

She turned her large eyes upon him and said:

"I should be very sorry, Doctor Ainsleigh, for you to have to bear pain for my sake. You know my nature is very hardened, and it takes a good deal of suffering to make me wince."

She said this with just a little laugh.

Having got the arm into the required position he dealt it a quick and skilful blow with the edge of his hand, and disunited the bones again. A spasmodic twitch of the muscles of the face was the only indication she gave that she felt it.

He next proceeded to apply the splints and bandage them on with all the tenderness and care of a woman.

"You are an excellent nurse," she said as he finished the operation, and laid the arm in a padded rest that he had brought.

"Who could help being so to such a charming patient?" was his answer.

"Fie, sir!" she exclaimed, as her face reddened a little. "A medical man should avoid flattery."

"True; but I speak the truth. However, we will not waste time in words. I think that if you get a good night's rest I shall be able to take you as far as Edinburgh to-morrow, and on the following day proceed to London. In the meantime, however, I must see these Rubins, for I suppose it is scarcely legal for me to remove you without their consent."

"No. And I doubt very much if they will give that consent."

"If not I must try and find means to enforce it."

"That will be difficult. Rubini is a villain, and if you offend him he will set you at defiance."

"You told me this morning that you believed it was he who caused the accident. Have you any proof of that?"

"None. But I am certain that I am correct."

"But what were his motives for such a dastardly act?"

"I fear that I should be doing wrong in telling you."

"There I must differ with you. If this villain has been guilty of wilfully jeopardizing your life, he must be punished. Or if the absence of proof would render his chances of legal punishment too remote to make it worth while to apply to a magistrate, the knowledge you may possess may with will enable me to use it as a power to force him to release you. I must therefore press you to tell me all."

She was silent for a little while, and then made answer and said:

"On one condition only."

"On any conditions you like to name."

"Then I must exact a promise from you that on no consideration will you impart the information to a third person, and that you will not let Rubini know that you are aware of it, excepting as a last resort. Use it only as a weapon when every other argument fails. These people have considerable influence in the theatrical and musical world, and he threatened me that he would, in the event of my speaking, ruin my mamma in her profession, and take all her pupils from her. For her sake then I ask for this promise."

"I make it solemnly," Robert answered.

"Well, almost before I had been in Rubini's service a week, he commenced to pay great attention to me, and was continually visiting me at my lodgings, always on the pretence that he wished me to try a piece of new music, or a new song. He also brought presents of fruit and odds and ends, so that I began to think he was exceedingly kind, and that the opinion I had previously formed of him was erroneous and unjust. One afternoon he called, and seemed to be very excited, as though he was under the influence of drink. I was at the piano, trying a piece of music he had brought, when he came behind me and kissed me. With that kiss every feeling of respect I had borne for the man left me, and I began to fear and hate him. He apologized when he saw that I was angry, but subsequently got very rude in his conversation. I tried to get rid of him; but he would not go, and, being in strange lodgings, I was reluctant to appeal to my landlady. He began to talk of his wife, and said she was an ogress compared to me, and that her health was very bad, and she must soon die,

and when that event took place he would marry me if I would consent.

"The dastardly knave!" Robert murmured between his clenched teeth.

"I did not know until that moment how hard I was, I felt as if and I believe I could have killed the man without one feeling of pity. A carving-knife was lying on the table, for I had only just finished my dinner when he came. I seized this knife and kept him at bay, for he wanted to embrace me. I told him that if he dared to insult me again I would not be responsible for the consequences. When he saw that I was in earnest he apologized, and said he had only been joking. He left me, and then I felt as if my heart would break with indignation. His wife was not performing that evening, so when I knew that he had gone to the theatre, for it was necessary for him to be there early, I hurried to his apartments and saw Mrs. Rubini. I told her all that had taken place. It seemed to make a perfect fury of her and she vowed that she would kill him if he did not alter. In her jealous rage she was as strongly incensed against me as against her husband. She said that my doll's face had bewitched him, and I was as much to blame as he. I need scarcely say that when I left her I felt very unhappy, for I was not slow to perceive that by going to her I had done more mischief than good."

"When I saw Rubini on the following night I was quite frightened with the way he looked at me. When he got an opportunity to speak to me privately he used epithets such as I had never heard before in my life; said that I had made mischief between him and his wife, and that he would render my existence a burden to me if I did not mind. The next day he called at my lodgings, said I was a very foolish girl, that I was ruining my own interests, and that if I continued to entertain such straightforward notions I should never rise in the profession. He pretended to be very sorry for what he had said on the previous evening, and asked my forgiveness. I replied that I forgave him and the matter should end; but the villain then renewed his overtures, and vowed that he loved me to distraction."

"From that day he continued to persecute me. The more I tried to avoid him the more he followed me about, while the jealousy of his wife seemed to destroy every womanly feeling in her breast, and she made me most unhappy and treated me with positive cruelty. I did not like to write to my mamma, for the very things she cautioned me against were happening. I used to laugh at her then and say that she was foolish and knew nothing at all about the profession. And whom else had I to appeal to? Not a friend in the world."

"Yes, I hope that I stand in the light of a friend," said Robert, tenderly.

"You have proved yourself to be a true friend, Doctor Ainsleigh, but then you were a stranger to me and I would not have dared to have taken the liberty of writing to you."

"But to resume my narrative: On the night of the accident I was a little late in arriving at the theatre, and hurried to my dressing-room and looked the door. I had removed my bonnet and shawl, when I became conscious of a noise that sounded like a person moving in a large cupboard at the end of the room. I got very frightened, and rushed to my door, but in my confusion could not unlock it, and you may judge my astonishment and alarm when Rubini stepped from the cupboard. I demanded to know the meaning of his unpardonable intrusion. He said that he had done it for a joke and that I was a stupid, nervous girl. Before I could offer the slightest resistance he seized me round the waist, and dragged me to the centre of the room. I screamed frantically, and in a few moments the door was burst open by some of the scene-shifters, headed by Mrs. Rubini, whose room was close to mine. She ordered the men away, and then ensued a terrible scene between her and her husband. I threw myself at her feet and begged her to protect me from him. But she spurned me away, and said I was worse than he, for I encouraged him. And he, monster of iniquity as he is, dared to perjure his soul and tell his wife that I invited him to my room."

"From that moment I hated the profession. I had been in it a very short time, but I had seen enough of its deception, its glaring immorality, its jealousies, and its irreligion, to make me shudder and my soul shrink within me. I was distracted. I knew not how to act, but I resolved to take an early opportunity to quit it, for one cannot pass through mud without being defiled, and I would die sooner than my good name should be stained. During that evening Rubini drank very much, so that he was almost intoxicated. Once while I was standing in one of the wings he came to me, and putting his head close to mine so that his foetid breath came into my face he whispered that he would have my revenge, and if I did not mind he would kill me. Of course I did not

attach any serious importance to the words, seeing the condition he was in, and without answering him I moved away.

"At a later period of the performance, when the last scene was being set, I saw him meddling with the machinery used for the ascent of Marguerite and the angels. I was some distance from him, but I fancied I saw the gleam of a knife in his hand. Even that did not strike me then as being peculiar, for he often superintended the setting of the scenes. Subsequently, when I was about to take my place on the throne, he came and insisted on my standing on a different iron to the one I had used on other occasions, his excuse being that, as I was a taller figure than the young lady who had before occupied it, it would make the grouping more artistic. He himself strapped me. When I had risen about ten feet my strap broke and I fell.

"The result you know. I was carried home in an insensible condition, but no medical assistance was called that night. I suffered great agony all that night with my arm, and it was not until late the next morning that anything was done for me. Then Rubini called, in company with a low-looking man, Rubini said he was a doctor, and the fellow bandaged my arm and pretended to set it, but he hurt me fearfully. They went away together, and in a little while the so-called doctor returned with a bottle of medicine, but said I was not to take a dose till six o'clock in the evening and it would then relieve me of pain, and the reason that I was not to take it before the time named was on account of my being feverish.

"About an hour after Rubini had left me, however, I got so bad that I was determined to take the medicine. A few minutes after swallowing the dose an unaccountable drowsiness seized me and I seemed to get perfectly powerless and totally incapable of either moving or speaking. This feeling gradually gave place to total insensibility. I must have slept some time, and when I awoke the pains in my body were almost gone, but I had a horrible headache, with a sense of great weight in the eyes and on the top of the head. About half-past five Rubini called upon me and brought me some jelly. He appeared sincere in his grief for the accident, and asked my forgiveness for his foolish conduct in the past. I told him that if he would but leave me alone I would never mention the subject again. He took out his watch in a little while and said, 'It is time you took your medicine. The doctor is very anxious that you should take it regularly and to the time.' I refused to have it. He pressed me very hard to take it, but I was firm, and so he went away, saying that I was incorrigible. Each dose that I took afterwards had the same effect as the first, and I have no doubt now that it was some powerful narcotic."

Miss Holmwood had told her story with all the frank ingenuousness of a noble and honest girl, neither restraining anything nor setting anything down in malice. She was a stranger to the art of dissembling, and what she had to tell her nature prompted her to tell in its entirety, and it was to be doubted if, in the innocence of her heart, she fully realized the diabolical intentions of Rubini.

Robert had had difficulty in restraining his impatience during the narrative. His blood boiled, and he felt inclined to rush off there and then to summarily chastize the villain.

"What you have told me," he exclaimed, as she finished, "must at once be laid before a magistrate, since this fellow has been guilty of a cowardly attempt upon your life."

"Not for the world," she answered, quickly, "would I have the matter go into a court of law. I shrink from having my name brought before the public. I should be for ever disgraced in the eyes of all my relations."

"On the contrary, it will effectually close the mouths of those who might now be inclined to sully your name, as well as bring these villains to a well-merited punishment."

"No, no, I will never sanction such a course. If my name were to get into the papers, I think my poor mamma would go mad."

"But you could sue in your professional name."

"My real name would have to be made known in the course of the inquiry. Besides, what would my unsupported testimony avail me? This Rubini would swear anything. No, you must please to abandon all idea of making the affair public."

"As you will, Miss Holmwood; but it is a pity to let such a villain escape."

"There is no alternative. You may use your knowledge as a power to induce him to cancel my indentures. That is all you can do. I dare say you wonder why I have been so free in telling you my troubles; the fact is you have inspired me with confidence, and made me feel as if you were a very old friend."

"I am exceedingly glad that that is the case," answered Robert, not a little proud.

"I know you will think I am a very foolish girl," continued the charming invalid. "But never in my life have I longed for sympathy so much as I have done the last few days. It is so very hard to be ill amongst strangers and never see a friendly face. Perhaps my illness has made me stupid, but I can't help the feeling, and you have been so kind and good to me and cheered me so much that I seem as if I couldn't keep anything from you."

How his heart knocked at his ribs as she said this, and how his face glowed with a hot and burning heat, and how he longed to press the little hand which he had taken between his again to his lips! But that he was afraid that she would consider it a liberty he would have done so! And how he gazed into her eyes with unspeakable admiration—large, clear, beautiful eyes, such as he had never seen before; no, never, he was quite sure.

Who loves raves—'tis youth's frenzy; but the cure
Is bitterer still, as charm by charm unwinds
Which robed our idols.

And as he sat there, with his love growing in his heart, he saw nothing of the huge black shadow that was creeping up slowly, slowly over his path in life, and he little recked that the father who had been so proud of him was at that moment steeped in the dreamless sleep of death. Verily, life is a strange problem.

"I am honoured by your confidence, Miss Holmwood," he said, in answer to her last remark, "and I cannot help feeling proud that I have inspired you with so much confidence. I trust that I may long enjoy the privilege of being your friend."

"The privilege and the honour are mine," she answered. "And do you know that it almost makes me vain when I think that you have come all the way from London solely on my account? Such disinterested kindness shown to a friendless girl is sure to bring its reward."

"I am not so sure that my kindness is disinterested. I am bound to confess that I did think so at first, but my mind has changed, and I am stirred by peculiarly interested and selfish motives."

"Indeed, What are they, doctor?"

"You must pardon me for declining to answer your question just now, but this much I may tell you, I shall claim a payment or rather reward for my services."

"Indeed!" in a still greater tone of surprise, with just a touch of sadness in it, "I am afraid then you will be disappointed."

"I hope not," as he rose and top-coated himself, and got his hat and umbrella; "but it is time I was off, or I may not see Rubini to-night."

"If you really expect payment I must in honesty refuse your services," answered the young lady, without seeming to notice his last words. "I have no means myself, and I am quite sure my mamma could not afford it."

He laughed heartily as he took her hand, and bending just a little over her, in that manner that a doctor is privileged to do—quite privileged, you know—he said:

"Do not make yourself uneasy, my dear girl. It is not money I shall require, but something that money cannot buy."

"Really you are talking strangely, Doctor Almsleigh, and I do not understand you. Perhaps it is owing to my dulness of comprehension, and I must press you for an explanation."

"You shall have it, Miss Holmwood, some day." He raised her hand quickly, and kissed it with a great, sounding kiss.

"Doctor Almsleigh!"

But he had gone, and she heard his hearty laugh as he went out of the door, and with the sound of that kiss still ringing in her ears she looked at the spot where he had pressed his lips and murmured:

"Heaven bless him!"

(To be continued.)

NOT A COMPLIMENT.—A gentleman in a conservatory with a lady picked up a bluebell, and, taking out his pencil, wrote the following lines, which, with the flower, he presented to the lady:

This pretty flower, of heavenly hue,
Must surely be allied to you;
For you, dear girl, are heavenly too.

To which the lady replied, thinking of the cold weather and the snow all around:

If, sir, your compliment be true,
I'm sorry that I look so blue.

STREET IMPROVEMENT.—An improvement has been introduced into one leading thoroughfare at the west end. In that part of Piccadilly which is in the parish of St. James the lamps at the corners of streets are made to show the names of those streets at night, so that there is less fear this winter than

heretofore of the benighted pedestrian being "lost in London." This is done by a new appliance consisting of a frame which fits over the top of the lamp, with the names of the streets marked on it. In a few days this improvement is to be extended eastwards to Piccadilly Circus, and also along the Strand, and part, at least, of Holborn. It is to be hoped that the rest of the parishes of the metropolis will speedily "follow suit," and have a jet of gas alight day and night for the convenience of smokers, for whom so much is done by our kind friends, the railway directors, and an example, therefore, given to mankind.

MARLIN MARDUKE.

CHAPTER XIV.

To advance other characters in this story it is necessary to leave Zona and Elena for a time and return to the two travellers for whose capture or death Geoffrey Marduke had offered a great reward.

The reader will remember that we left Richard Englemort and his seeming valet, Hubert Varil, in the strange abode of the hermit of the beach immediately after their entrance therein. It will be remembered, too, that as the hermit first gazed fully upon the proud and lofty features of the seeming valet, Varil, the former was instantly overcome by some great and secret emotion, so that he sank down into a seat and covered his face with his hands.

This remarkable and undoubtedly involuntary concealment of his features by the hermit might have arisen from some of those powerful emotions of the human heart—fear, or terror, or grief, or remorse, or dislike, which causes one to throw his hands to his face to shut out some painful object; or it might have been caused by the hermit's desire to avoid recognition.

In this case, however, the act was the effect both of grief and a desire to escape immediate recognition, as will be explained hereafter.

Varil, however, had not yet recognized in the bowed and aged form and in the white-bearded, wrinkled, and time-smitten features of the hermit any person whom he remembered ever to have seen before that moment.

Yet both Varil and Englemort did not fail to observe with much surprise the emotion and gesture of the hermit, though neither imagined that he desired to avoid recognition.

Varil and his companion exchanged glances of wonder, and the latter said, in a kindly tone:

"My friend, I hope that our presence here does not pain you. Heaven knows, old man, in peril as we are, we would rather encounter thrice as great than afflict a stranger."

The hermit made no reply, though he groaned deeply and seemed ready to sob.

Again the amazed travellers exchanged glances of wonder and sympathy, and Englemort said:

"Come, Hubert, let us depart, since our presence—"

"Stay!" exclaimed the hermit, lowering his hands and rising to his feet. "Stay, for your presence hath naught to do with my emotion. It is an infirmity to which I am often subject. Stay, I beseech you, gentlemen, and if in aught an old and feeble man may aid you, I am at your service."

He spoke in a weak and tremulous voice, totally unlike that in which he had first addressed the travellers, and they, who were keen and observant men, marked the change.

But, though they noticed how the deep and sonorous voice had become feeble and shaken, they did not suspect that the hermit so changed it to disguise it, lest they, failing to recognize him by his features, should recognize him by his voice, as one whom they, and especially Varil, had known many years before.

The hermit, it was plain, had once been a man of lofty and erect stature, though now he appeared bowed and decrepit. Of his forehead nothing could be seen, nor of the shape of his head, for he wore a huge sealakin cap drawn down over his brow even to the hiding of his eyebrows and the deep shading of a pair of keen, deep-set, and brilliant eyes, full of fire and strength.

This cap, purposely disfiguring, was so fashioned as to conceal the true shape of his head, and had a kind of cape or apron attached to its sides and rear which descended far upon his back and shoulders, thus admirably concealing their shape and individual characteristics.

His beard was immense and white as the driven snow, and not only concealed his lips, chin, throat and cheeks, but grew upon his cheekbones, almost to his eyes. So that of all of the features of his face nothing was plainly visible except the nose, and that feature was perfect and aquiline in shape.

His garb was fashioned loosely of sheepskin, from which the wool had not been removed, the wool worn

outwardly, and kept scrupulously white and clean. Huge and coarse boots, reaching above the knees, and in fashion like those worn by fishermen, who wade much in water and marsh, clothed his feet.

His hands, too, were concealed in heavy gloves of sealakin, dressed with the hair on, and only the tips of his fingers and thumbs were visible, the ends of these great gloves being clipped off for ease of touch and grasp.

The apartment was provided with many comforts and even luxuries, and on every side there were many evidences that the hermit was a man of taste and uncommon education. Several books, rare and costly, and in various languages, lay upon a table, or stood near at hand in a small bookcase suspended upon the wall.

The experienced and observant eyes of the two travellers took all these things in at a glance, for they were men of wary and acute minds, accustomed to examine minutely and rapidly all with which they came in contact.

"You call us gentlemen," said Englemort, "as if my servant and I were of equal rank."

"Good sir," replied the hermit, in that feeble and tremulous tone he saw fit to assume in conversing with the travellers, "you have honoured me by seeking refuge from some peril in my poor and humble abode, and therefore should have full confidence in my faith. This gentleman, whom you call your servant, is undoubtedly your equal, if not superior, in rank. Do not attempt to deceive a man more experienced in men than Richard Englemort, once a simple peer of Northumberland, Lord Alvin by title, though, perchance, in foreign realms he may have gained a higher rank."

The travellers exchanged glances of amazement at the unexpected knowledge displayed by the mysterious hermit, but showed no alarm.

Englemort replied calmly and with that lofty demeanour which made him so remarkable:

"My friend, I will not deny that I am Richard Englemort, Lord Alvin of Alvin Moor, since you have recognized me. Nor would I deny it in London, in the presence of the court, for no deed that I have ever done has made less brilliant the hereditary title of my house. Nor do I esteem the title which I have won in foreign realms so highly as I do that I inherited from my father."

"May I ask what title you have won during the many years that your lordship hath seen fit to absent yourself from England?"

"They call me Duke of Varidermandt in Austria, so created for my services in the state and upon the battlefield, old man," replied Englemort, proudly. "I pardon a curiosity which might be called presumptuous in one less aged, my friend."

"Thanks, my lord duke," said the hermit, scarcely disguising a sarcastic tone, while his heavy white moustache seemed to be moved by a smile. "But if you so highly esteemed the noble title of Lord Alvin of Alvin Moor, why did you desert the home of your fathers and give all your strength of arm and brain to the Austrians?"

"You have no right to ask, nor do I choose to reply," said Englemort, haughtily.

"That is true, my lord, so far as you know," observed the hermit, "and I will say no more until I shall have learned what peril is about you. You came from the 'Stuart Arms,' directed by that pearl of beauty and virtue, Elena Rheinhard, as she is called in Anglesey. Are you pursued?"

"Of that I know not," replied Englemort. "There was a great affray going on when the maiden aided us to escape from the inn, and I am very sure that our escape was unperceived, and that we are not, at least at present, pursued."

"You placed your heads in the lion's mouth in coming to Anglesey, my lord; but in going to the 'Stuart Arms' you incurred additional danger. It is the resort of smugglers, thieves and murderers, and its landlord is an assassin of the most merciless nature."

"That we did not know, my friend—may I ask by what name I shall address you, sir, for it is very plain that you are no common person?" said Englemort.

"They call me Peter the Bearded in Anglesey, but as we are all nobles in a hovel," here he glanced meaningly at the seeming attendant, "you may call me Sir Hermit. How say you, Viscount Varil?—or if the earl, your father, be dead, should I not call you Earl Varil of Huberton?"

Varil, cool and man of the world as he was, started nearly to his feet on being thus addressed by the hermit, and exclaimed:

"Take care, old man, for even extreme old age may give offence by overweening impertinence."

Hubert Varil uttered these words in a tone as haughty as that so characteristic of his companion Englemort, and the attitude he assumed was that of a man used to high command, even among the noblest.

"Come," said the hermit, "you are neither young men—you, Lord Alvin, must be fully forty-five, and no more, while as your hair and beard are—"

"Ay, Sir Hermit," interrupted Englemort, "white from grief, not by touch of time."

"We will speak of that presently. Perhaps I may tell you why Richard Englemort, of Alvin Moor, became suddenly white-haired," continued the hermit. "I said you were neither young men, though you are in your prime, and two staller men to look upon are not in all England."

Here the hermit paused and seemed to gaze admiringly upon the two, alternately, as if he, individually, possessed some secret reason to be proud of them, and then he continued:

"You, Viscount Varil, must be fully forty-eight years of age, as this is December, 1688, and you were born in December, 1640—yet you are both young compared to me, as I am over threescore and ten."

"It is because you are so old, sir, that we allow you this freedom of speech," remarked Varil, quietly, though he marvelled greatly on hearing the hermit speak so correctly of his age.

"Thanks, viscount," replied the hermit, and again his tremulous tones seemed sarcastic. "But may I ask what title Viscount Varil won yonder in the service of the Austrians?"

"They call me Prince of Salmardt in Vienna," replied Varil, in his calm and easy voice.

"So high a title as that!" exclaimed the hermit, and again his eyes sparkled with secret pleasure.

"So they made the runaway viscount a prince?"

"A prince and a general, and well he deserved it all, Sir Hermit," said Englemort, heartily. "Now sir, will you deign to tell us who you are, for you appear exceedingly well-informed concerning us?"

"I pray you tell me, my lord, what you think of the beauty of the inn."

"She is very fair," replied Englemort, greatly amazed by the sudden question. "Indeed, she is most lovely, and, I have no doubt, as good as beautiful, marvellous as that is living in Anglesey."

"Heaven hath protected her, my lord," said the hermit. "But saw you nothing in her beautiful face that reminded you of the wife you lost at sea some nineteen years ago?"

A deep flush, which instantly gave way to an ashy paleness, overspread the handsome features of Richard Englemort, and for the first time his voice trembled as he said:

"Sir, I did, indeed, mark that resemblance, and it opened afresh wounds of which you seem to know something. In Heaven's name, sir, who are you?"

"Patience, my lord, and be assured that we shall not part until I have told you who I am. And you, Viscount Varil," he added, as he fixed his eyes upon the other, "did you see him whom they call the commandant, one Marlin Marduke?"

"I did."

"He is goodly young man, is he not, in your eyes?" asked the hermit, with much animation.

"He struck me as being one far above his station, if indeed he be the son of him they call his father."

"So! And you saw his father—him they call Geoffrey Marduke?"

"I saw him," replied Varil, laconically.

"And you, my Lord Alvin, you saw him—I mean Geoffrey Marduke?"

"Indeed I did, and his other son. They call him Captain Herod—as bold and insolent a scoundrel of a smuggler as ever I encountered. Geoffrey Marduke I recognized as one whom I met many years ago."

"Wait," said the hermit. "Let me prove to you that I know well to whom I am speaking. You are in no immediate danger from which I cannot rescue you, and it pleases me to converse with you. Indeed, sir, it is seldom that the hut of Peter the Bearded hath sheltered lords of high degree."

"That may be," remarked Richard Englemort, "that may be, but we may be in greater peril than you imagine. A fierce affray was progressing when we fled from the inn, and as we did so we heard this Geoffrey Marduke offering a great reward for our capture."

"Indeed! Then he did not fail to recognize you," interrupted the hermit. "But rest easy in mind, for with me you are safe even from Geoffrey Marduke. But perhaps the business which led you to Anglesey may demand your immediate attention?"

"Recent news from London," replied Englemort, "removes my desire to hasten on, Sir Hermit. My business was with King James the Second—to inform him that his retirement to France would meet with the hearty approval of the Prince of Orange. But as James has fled my business with him is at an end. I trust no officious person will again stay his flight."

"So you serve the Prince of Orange—you who shed your blood for the Stuarts on many a battlefield?"

"The times have changed, and we have changed with them," replied Englemort. "When I and my companion—"

"You mean your cousin, Viscount Varil," interrupted the hermit.

This sudden interruption was another powerful proof of the strange and intimate knowledge possessed by the mysterious hermit of all that related to the former association of the two travellers, and they again exchanged glances of surprise.

"I do not deny that this gentleman is my cousin," resumed Englemort, "for he is a relative to be proud of. When he and I fought for the Stuarts they were the friends of England."

"So James has fled," remarked the hermit, "and the husband of his daughter will take his throne and crown—no doubt with the full consent and eager desire of that daughter. But let royalty attend to that. No doubt you are eager to hear something of the history of this Geoffrey Marduke?"

"The old man is garrulous," whispered Varil to Englemort, "so let us hear what he has to say. It may at least amuse us, and I confess I have some curiosity to hear more of the smuggler who was once—"

Varil's whispering was interrupted by the voice of the hermit, who said:

"Ye look like men who have fasted hard and long. Here is where you may refresh yourselves while I speak of Geoffrey Marduke and others."

With these words he opened a closet and produced wine and edibles, greatly to the satisfaction of the two travellers, who were indeed well nigh famished.

"I will first speak of the Earl of Huberton," began the hermit, but at that moment the fierce baying of his great dog without warned him that some stranger was approaching his abode. "Be not alarmed, gentlemen," said the hermit, "for even though it were your enemies in close and vindictive pursuit your escape is certain."

He then turned and issued from the room, closing the door after him.

"A very strange and mysterious character, Richard," said Varil. "Can you recall aught in him to your remembrance of the past?"

"Nothing, Cousin Varil; and yet he certainly knows us well. He has promised that we shall not part until he makes himself known, and no doubt he will keep that promise."

"He averred, too," said Varil, "that our escape from those bloodhounds of the sea is certain, but of that I am not satisfied. If this place be surrounded we will be lost. We need expect no mercy from him who is now called Geoffrey Marduke."

"Of that there can be no doubt," replied Englemort, as he glanced around the apartment. "We are indeed in great peril; yet, and I know not why, my heart bids me place full faith in the power of this mysterious old man."

"There is indeed something in his air which encourages me," said Varil, "though had I dreamed that we were to fall in with this Geoffrey Marduke, powerful as he is to destroy us, never would I have set forth to urge the cowardly king to flee from England. As all has happened, our journey would have been bootless, for James has of his own accord played into the hands of William of Orange and fled to the King of France."

While the two travellers were thus discoursing the door of the little apartment was opened and the mysterious hermit entered, saying:

"Come in, lady. This is the place of refuge pointed out by the beauty of the inn. Enter, for all here are your friends."

As he spoke these words the lady who had so severely wounded Kaspar Rheinhard glided in, saying, as her eyes fell upon the forms of the two gentlemen:

"For the love of Heaven, defend me from those who pursue me!"

"You are safe, lady. You are perfectly safe," said the hermit, as he filled a glass with wine and extended it towards the lady, whose face was covered with sand and mire, she having fallen more than once during her headlong flight from the inn.

So much was her countenance disguised by these unpleasant stains that it was impossible to distinguish her features.

"Drink this, lady—it is not much—and it will strengthen you."

"Ah, but as I ran I heard hasty steps following me!" panted the lady, who could scarcely speak from exhaustion of breath.

"I looked over the beach towards the inn," said the hermit. "The glare of some conflagration was upon it; but I saw but one form in the distance, if, indeed, it was not a stake which I mistook for a man. Would you cleanse the sand and mire from your face?"

"No, no!" exclaimed the lady, with sudden energy. "The wine! the wine!—give it to me; I am very faint."

The hermit did as she desired; and she drank it eagerly. When she had done so she reclined upon a couch, and said:

"There, there, kind sir; I pray you leave me to rest for a time. The maiden at the inn—may Heaven bless her!—said you would be my friend."

"And so I will, lady. So, since you will not cleanse your face from the mire—"

"Ah, I am all too weak, my friend, to do that now."

"Then, by my faith, permit an old man to do that office for you," said the hermit, moving towards a pitcher and ewer which stood near.

But again the deep and fierce baying of his faithful dog without warned him of approaching friends or enemies.

"Ah, Heaven!" cried the lady, in great alarm. "I am pursued! I am lost!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE flight of Fry, the courier—for it was he who now caused the baying of the hermit's dog—in obedience to the signal of Elena, given in the apparently meaningless words, "They are not in the moon," had not been interrupted or he would have arrived at the hut before the shipwrecked lady.

As has been stated, Fry readily evaded the intoxicated sentinels placed around the "Stuart Arms" by the chief of the smugglers, and betook himself to the full strength of his long legs for the beach.

Being of the greyhound build, he flew rather than ran, as he ever was eager to serve Elena, whom he admired with exceedingly great admiration.

Our friend Jehosaphat Fry was by no means the half-idiot many had the folly to suppose him. He was, on the contrary, honest and steady, and had a depth of shrewdness which would have made a man of him but for his cowardice.

That some one liked by Elena was in great danger, and that they had sought temporary refuge in the hut of the hermit, he well knew from his alliance with Elena in aiding many to escape from the suspected villany of the landlord.

No favourite of a king, having received some great and important commission from his monarch, could be prouder than the courier when entrusted with a command by Elena.

The steps and leaps, therefore, which he made along the beach were immense and rapid, and such marvellous speed would have carried him to his destination many minutes in advance of the strange lady, who, as the reader has been informed, left the inn before the courier, but for one of those accidents into which Jehosaphat ever had an alacrity of falling.

As he sped on his way a large rock lay immediately in his path, and persons of ordinary activity would have passed around the obstacle. But the courier, whose legs were enormously long and elastic as steel, delighted in his agility, and, therefore, turning neither to the left nor to the right, rushed straight at the rock and bounded over it.

The rise and sweep of this immense leap were admirable, but the fall was disastrous, for Fry's long legs came across some person hidden on the other side of the rock, and just in the act of rising from the sand. The collision pitched the courier many feet forward, so that he fell upon his hands and knees, with an idea that he had come across some of the monsters often spoken of by the tale-tellers of Anglesey.

This idea became a fixed belief when, as he attempted to scramble to his feet, he felt himself grappled and again hurled, face downward into the sand. This belief was too much for the nerves of the excited courier, so, with a mournful groan, he swooned on the spot.

He remained in this unconscious state for several minutes, and when he regained his senses he opened his eyes to be so affrighted by the idea that the supposed monster was making a hasty meal of him that he was very near relapsing into a comatose state again.

Something had turned him over upon his back, was leaning over him, and, as he supposed, claving at his vitals. A wild shriek of terror broke from Fry's lips, and therewith the something placed a hand or claw over his mouth and said:

"Be silent! I do not wish to harm you, but if you cry out again I will kill you!"

The glare of the distant fires reflected by the sky enabled the courier to see that his supposed monster was a man, who brandished a long and glittering knife before his eyes.

"Be silent, and I will not harm you, Phat Fry," said this man, calling the courier by a nickname often used towards him in Anglesey—Phat Fry being an abbreviation of the somewhat lengthy Jehosaphat Fry, as well as a keen irony aimed at his long and lean carcass. "You ought to be mar-

dered outright for nearly killing me by jumping upon me."

"Oh! it is Obel Ling!" cried the courier, rising to a sitting posture. "Oh, I thought it was a sea-monster."

"No, I am a land-monster," replied Obel Ling, with grim bitterness, "and some one has nearly made an end of me. Come, I thought I never could get you out of that swoon. But no law, man, for I see some one running along the beach in this direction. Crouch down behind the rock—it is a woman, I think."

They lay flat upon the sand in the shade of the rock, and very soon after the strange lady ran by without perceiving them.

"I wonder who that can be," said the spy, as he gazed after the fugitive form. "She is evidently running for the hermit's hut."

"The hermit's hut!" exclaimed Fry, remembering for the first time his mission. "I must hasten to get there too. A woman! Yes, I see the flutter of her dress as she runs. It must be Mistress Elena."

"Mistress Elena? And why should she be running along the beach at this hour? No matter," said the spy. "Here, I am badly wounded and need your help. Some of these villains shot me in the leg, and though the wound seemed slight at first, it begins to get so bad that I can scarcely walk. But for that I'd be on my way elsewhere. I wish to see the hermit also, so we will go together. They say he is famous for binding and curing wounds. Get up, and I will lean on your arm. Do not try to shake me off and take to your heels, or, as I live, I will stab you."

Fry scrambled to his feet, and as he knew the desperate character of the man who grasped his arm made no attempt to escape.

"How was it at the inn when you left there?" asked the spy. "Is the commandant dead?"

"No, not dead, though very likely wounded unto death, Mr. Ling."

"Where is he? What have they done with him?"

"He's in one of the lower rooms of the inn, closely guarded, and no doubt they will put him to death in the end. Ho! Mr. Ling, you lean rather too heavily."

"I can walk no farther," said the spy. "I am very lame and in pain. You must carry me on your back."

"Carry you on my back!" exclaimed Fry. "Am I a horse?"

"You're a donkey," replied Obel Ling, grimly, "if you think I shall not have my way. I tell you I must see the hermit, for I have a matter of importance to tell him, and if I do not have surgery soon I shall be a dead man. So bend over, that I may mount upon your back."

"Oh, Heavens! I can't carry you, Mr. Ling. I might if we were on good solid ground, but on this sandy and miry beach my feet sink five inches every step," pleaded the courier.

"If you would rather die right here, Phat Fry, you can do so," said the spy, fiercely; "for if you do not carry me I will stab you to the centre of your cowardly heart."

He uttered this threat with such terrific ferocity that the miserable courier felt his hair rise on end, while his blood chilled in his veins. The grasp of the spy betrayed no weakness of hand and arm, however weak and useless his legs might have become.

(To be continued.)

JUST FOR MISCHIEF.

Two young girls, pretty and merry, were sitting in a cozy boudoir, turning over the contents of a box of photographs.

"Where did you get so many, Sue?" asked one.

"Cousin John is in a photographer's gallery, and he gave me a great lot. They are all fancy heads or copies of paintings. Here is a lovely face."

It was a lovely face Sue Carlington held up for her friend's admiration, fair and sweet, with waves of soft curling hair falling loose under a coquettish little hat.

"It looks like a portrait," Nora Leslie replied, taking it in her hand.

"No, there are no portraits here. Oh, Nora, I've thought of something splendid! Let's send it to Ned Hazard, with a love-letter. He is always fancying every girl completely smitten by his great black eyes and huge blonde whiskers. Let's bother him, and have some fun."

"But—"

"But nothing. It is just for mischief, and nobody will ever know. I should like to take a little of the conceit out of that fop. Come! I can write a hand nobody will ever recognize and we will write the letter."

Some maidenly instinct in Nora's heart shrank from this freak of her merry companion, but she was overborne by her, and the letter was written. The temptation was certainly strong for Ned Hazard was the most conceited, empty-headed dandy that ever exposed himself to the ridicule of any girlhood. But his empty head was decorated by a handsome face, his pockets well filled with inherited wealth, and he fancied himself irresistible. He had come to the pretty town where Nora and Sue were acknowledged belles for a summer sojourn, and, having relatives there, was introduced to society, where his affected manners and evident good opinion of his own merits were soon the laughing-stock of the frank, cordial community.

The letter written by Sue, containing the picture of the lovely face, was duly answered, and followed by others, until a sudden summons home cut short Ned's flourishing flirtation upon paper. With a glowing epistle promising to return at the earliest possible opportunity, he bade farewell to his unknown admirer, and carried his blunder whiskers out of the town.

A year later, when Sue had nearly forgotten her escapade, there was a sensation in the town caused by the return of Laurence Halstead, one of the boys who had gone from home seven years before to seek his fortune in California. Under the care of an uncle, long resident in San Francisco, he had won an enviable reputation as a business man, and had inherited the fortune his uncle had acquired in years of mercantile life.

Everybody was ready to receive him with open arms. His mother, who had lived in quiet retirement, moved into a handsome new house, and prepared it for her son's coming, adding to the interest of his arrival by her certainty that he returned home heart-whole and fancy-free.

One of the first calls Laurence Halstead made was at Mrs. Carlington's, and Sue gave him cordial welcome. He had left her a school-girl, he found her a wondrously pretty maiden. But she, remembering well the bright, frank youth who had carried her books on often to the seminary, was not quite sure that seven years of absence had improved her old friend. He had gone away a bright, animated young fellow, full of life and hope; he came home grave, almost to sadness, reserved and aged far more than the added years warranted.

Upon the strength of long friendship Laurence Halstead became a frequent visitor at Mrs. Carlington's, and by the very force of contrast he and Sue were soon fast friends. The girl's quick wit, her sparkling conversation, her sunny temperament, were very fascinating to the grave man, who sought more and more in her society diversion from his own gloomy thoughts.

In justice to Laurence Halstead it must be said that, having but a modest estimate of his own powers of attraction, he did not think of any danger to Sue's heart in this pleasant intercourse. He had a humanitarian idea that at thirty he was an elderly man, world-weary—one from whom youth would flee and lively chatter become grave conversation in his presence. It surprised him that Sue found no fault in his advanced years, but he never reflected that her cordial, sunny liking for him might become a deeper emotion.

The whole year had come and gone since Laurence Halstead's home-coming. He had been Sue's escort at winter parties, at summer picnics; had learned duets with her, had talked with her gravely or gayly, as the mood dictated, and had thought of no farther result than a life-long friendship. But his mother, a tender, loving woman, read more truly a dawning trouble in Sue's sunny eyes, a soft, shy reserve in her gay speeches, and a tender flush upon her cheek for Laurence's coming.

"My son," she said to him one day, "do you love Susan Carlington?"

"Love her, mother!" he repeated, in accents of strongest amazement. "Why, she is a mere child."

"She is nineteen, and you are but thirty. If you do not love her, Laurence, you are doing her a grave wrong."

"I never intended that," he answered, in a troubled voice.

"For a year now, my son, you have paid her constant attention, have kept others from wooing her by your own presence beside her at all times, and I fear have won her love."

"I never sought it."

"Not in words, perhaps, but surely in other ways. It made me very happy to think it was so, Laurence, for I love Sue dearly, but now I grieve that my son should have trifled with so true and warm a heart."

"Mother—I am sure of what you now say?"

"No, I have had no confidence from Sue, Laurence; she is too maidenly to assume your love unless you had spoken it. Only as a woman reads a woman's heart, I guess what I have told you."

"I will think of it."

Very gravely, with a serious sense of the responsibility of his task, Laurence Halstead thought of his mother's words. The result was a letter to Sue, offering her his hand—a manly letter, promising her all happiness if she was to give her as his wife, yet not a lover's letter.

But in the light of her own love it seemed to want nothing to Sue.

He would come for her answer in the evening, he said, and her heart was full of pure, trusting happiness as she awaited him. For, spite of her merry nature, Sue had a true, earnest heart, full of tenderness, and all her love was given to this grave, reserved man who had asked her to be his wife.

It chilled her a little when he came that he asked her to hear him a few minutes before she answered his letter.

"I will tell you," he said, in the grave voice that was habitual to him, "asking if you could love me well enough to be my wife, and yet, Susan, I feel that I must make a confession before I hear your answer. I will give you, I trust, a tender, true love, if you can marry me, but I cannot deceive you by letting you think you are the first love of my heart. I would spare you the story, but as my wife you will be sure to hear of it."

A hand of ice seemed grasping Sue's heart, but she waited, pale and silent, for what was to follow.

"You have met Adela Haines, my second cousin, have you not?" Laurence asked.

"No; I was away when she visited your mother."

"Three years ago she was my promised wife. I did not write to my mother, sure of her consent, and wishing to give her a happy surprise on my return home. A year ago, when I was on my way here, I purposed urging Adela to again visit my mother, I announcing our engagement. But I met a school friend I had not seen for years, and in our exchange of confidences I found Adela had given the love I believed mine to him. I could have forgiven her if she had frankly confessed to me that the love I had won had strayed away from me, but she wrote to me as if her heart was still all mine; knowing every line a falsehood. She had seemed to me all gentle purity, modesty and sweetness; but by her falsehood she tore away the mask she had worn for me, and I saw her forward, bold and unaided. It was a bitter waking, Sue, for I had given her a strong man's first true love."

"But might there not have been some mistake?" said Sue, forgetting herself in the sight of Laurence's anguish.

"Sue, I will tell you all. Adela, my betrothed wife—a girl I believed all modesty—had seen a young man, my schoolmate, as I told you, a handsome, brainless fellow of wealth. She had written to him, in a carefully disguised hand, such letters as no modest girl could have written to a stranger, signed in a fictitious name; but—Sue, you will scarcely believe me—she had actually enclosed her photograph to such a fellow as Ned Hazard, for him to parade amongst his companions and display as his last conquest."

White as death, Sue turned her face aside; but Laurence, unheeding her agitation, said:

"In my own breast, in a locket, I wore also that photograph, believing it had been taken for me only, during Adela's visit to my mother. I wrote to Adela. I told her she might have been free before, had she but frankly told me her love was no longer mine, and I enclosed the locket in my farewell. Now, Sue, you know all; how the love I bring you has been one woman's plaything, but if it may rest on yours it shall be faithful to you only."

There was a long silence in the room after Laurence ceased speaking. Believing that Sue was hesitating to answer him after his confidence, Laurence waited patiently, while Sue fought a fierce mental battle. She loved him. He offered her his hand and a love she felt sure she could make as true and enduring as the first one her hand had ignorantly wrested from him. But it would entail a lifetime of deceit, a theft of another woman's happiness, and it might be, an exposure that would win her Laurence's contempt for life.

"Laurence," she said, in a choked voice, "if Adela was true to you, would it make you happy?"

"It is scarcely worth while to talk of what is past now, Sue," he said, gently.

"Please answer my question," she pleaded.

"I have told you I loved her," he answered.

"And she loves you. She never wrote the letters to Ned Hazard, Laurence—never sent him her picture."

"How can you know that?"

"Because I wrote them. I sent the picture."

"You!"

In the excess of his amazement Laurence left the sofa where he had been sitting beside Sue and stood erect before her.

"You wrote those letters?" he repeated. "You sent Adela's picture to a stranger?"

"I deserve all the contempt you can feel," pleaded poor Sue, "but hear me please. I thought the picture was a fancy sketch. It was amongst some that my cousin gave me, assuring me that they were not portraits in the collection. It was a picture of a girl, and if we had carried it out Ned Hazard would have met Nora Leslie's brother, dressed in a waterproof cloak and bonnet, by appointment. He was so conceited that we wanted to give him a lesson; but, Laurence, I never suspected the picture was a portrait."

"And Adela believes me false!" broke from Laurence.

"Let me write to her. Give me her address, and let me try to remedy the trouble I have caused, and, Laurence, if you can, forgive me."

But, looking up, Sue found herself alone. Laurence had not dared to trust himself. He felt it unworthy of his manhood to meet Sue's confession with reproach, and he could not yet forgive the cruel mischief that had given him so many months of acute suffering, and painfully tortured Adela as keenly.

The poor girl, whose love of merry pranks had cost her so dear, crept to her own room to weep over her lost happiness, while Laurence Halstead carried his burden to his mother for counsel and loving sympathy.

Early the next day Sue was sitting in her own room, with a book in her hand, in whose pages she vainly strove to interest herself, when Mrs. Hazard came to her side.

Burning blushes rose to the young girl's cheeks as the older lady said, kindly:

"I have come to thank you, dear, for your courageous confession, and to assure you that Adela shall never know from Laurence or myself who was the author of the girlish mischief. I am sure you are heartily sorry for having committed it. Laurence has gone to tell Adela of his regret for ever having entrusted her."

"I can never tell you how sorry I am," Sue said, very humbly.

"I am sure of it; and Laurence tells me that you he could never sufficiently respect your youthful courage in making so painful a confession."

A few weeks later Laurence Halstead and his bride Adela returned to the town.

They saw several friends of Sue's family; but though she had expected her love for Laurence to be never forgotten, she was amazed to find that she had received news only of her own folly in penetrating a place of mischief that almost wrecked the happiness of two lives.

EVEN UNTO DEATH.

THEY stood down by the stone basin. The fountain was not playing, but the water trickled, with a complaining sound, from the angry-looking old lion's mouth. The breeze stirred the acornose branches above their heads. The last glances of sunlight shined on the leaves, and cast a faint glow over Madeline's face.

It was a sort of glade, at one extremity of the great garden, not far from the gardener's cottage; though the trees hid the picturesque little dwelling. Before them stretched the long sweep of shining flower-beds, parterres and terraces; then a thick belt of shrubberies and elm-trees; then the lofty roofs of the gloomy old mansion, where the Stukelys had reigned since the first Ralph came over to England, and reared the frowning pile; and that had been long enough before to make the house ancient even at the time of which I write, the year of grace 1799.

There the two stood, Madeline Noyce and young Robert Stukely, and in a summer-house on an eminence near old Madam Stukely, who glared down upon the pair with angry eyes and a general resemblance in her face to the stone lion of the fountain.

Not a syllable of the conversation between the youthful couple could reach her; but for all that she could have told, nearly word for word, what was being said.

Flowing with the girl was he, that young idiot? And she pretending to hesitate and be in doubt, standing there, with one hand raised to her cheek and the other hung over the edge of the basin within reach of Robert's; and he bending towards her, with all his soul in his eyes.

The creature knew very well that he would be near when she came out of the cottage, and had set the watering-pot to fill at the basin, as if thinking of nothing but her flowers and their needs.

Oh, madam understood!

Asking pledges and vows in return for those he offered, was he? Marry her the moment he became a free man; would he? She need only be patient

and leave and true till he came back from this journey; that was all, was it?

Then nobody could stand between them, and the gardener's niece should be Lady of Stukely, and reign there in place of madam—that was his plan, was it?

Old madam tore one of her lace ruffles to tatters in an uncontrollable spasm of rage. But by the time it passed she had jumped at a plan with true feline quickness; and now leaned back in her seat, perfectly calm and composed, with even a smile on her mouth, which was beautiful still, in spite of time and her hardness and pride.

The jet of water trickled out the slow complaint; the acornose trees whispered in the wind; the dying glow of sunset flung a last kiss on Madeline's cheek; the eager dialogue grew even more earnest; the lovers more and more forgot about the real world, with its trials and dangers lying so close to their radiant dreamland.

Then, suddenly, a voice rang across the musical stillness, and brought them back from their enchanted vision, old madam's voice calling:

"Robert, Madeline, children, I say!"

Both started at the unexpected sound, and looked about, uncertain whence it came.

"Children, I say," repeated the voice, and its tone was even sweeter and more persuasive than at first.

"It is madam calling," half-whispered Madeline, and a faint tremor of fear crossed through her accustomed darkened eyes.

"She wants us," murmured Stukely. "We must go to her, I suppose. You are not frightened?"

"No, not with you," she answered, bolting into his face to gain courage. "But what can she want?"

She refused to speak while she was in this morning."

"Let us go and see. She says 'children'—that is a good sign, at all events," said Robert, laughing a little.

He put Madeline's arm through his own, and drew her on. Before they had taken a dozen steps madam came out of the summer-house, and walked towards them, erect and stately, the smile still on her lips, but the murderous light glimmering, yet half-hid, in her eyes.

So the three met; Madeline somewhat pale, but composed enough, Robert's glance meeting his grandmother's, stern and defiant.

"Now don't stand there looking as if my grand-father who's dead and gone—have you any mercy on my soul? Come up to the house, you dreadful Robert, and bring Madeline with you. How do you do, child? By the way, I found you looked pale, this morning, when I met you; I saw you, though I pretended not to. You know this horrible boy is to go away to-morrow? That reminds me! I thought I forbade your meeting him again—"

"It was not her fault," Robert broke in.

"Who said it was?" demanded madam, her voice growing still more brisk and cheerful. "It was yours! I know that well enough, young gentlemen! Oh, you Stukelys! Just look at him, Maddy dear; there's a frown for you! I told you he had the family temper, and could show it fast enough the moment he was crossed in the least. But there, enough of this. Give me an arm, each of you. The sun is setting, and I shall get a famous catarrh if I stop out any longer."

They obeyed her request in silence, and she walked on between them without speaking another word. They turned into a broad alley, which led to the house, and mounted the granite steps to the colonnade that extended along the principal front of the mansion. In the same silence madam conducted them down the grand entrance-hall till they reached the library. She paused there, took her hand from Robert's arm, and motioned him to open the door, then passed first into the great, gloomy room.

Madeline felt Robert's touch for an instant upon her waist, and the quick cross gave her new strength and courage. They followed madam into the grand old chamber.

She sat down on an arm-chair, like a throne, at one end of the apartment.

The young couple paused at a little distance and stood regarding her, the utter astonishment visible in Madeline's face reflected in Robert's, with a certain defiance and suspicion added.

"And now," said madam, at last, "since you will not let me have my way, I suppose the only thing left is to let you have yours, provided you can find out what it is."

Madeline's face was divided between wonder and gratitude. She looked as if unable to realize the reality of what she had heard, and, oh, was so beautiful in her confusion!

But Robert's countenance was still grave and stern.

"I don't know if I understand you, grandmother."



[THE NOVICE.]

he said, after an instant's silence, during which madam had sat regarding him, as if expecting that he would speak. "I don't know if I understand."

Madam's eyes turned from his face to Madeline's, and back again to him, and rested once more on the girl; then she let the heavy lids droop over the sudden lighting which she felt kindle in their depths.

"He does not understand!" she said, playfully. "What a stupid boy it is, after all. Madeline knows already, I'll be bound! Oh, there are things the youngest girl could teach any man, in spite of the boasted wisdom of the sex."

Robert did not smile. He adored his grandmother; but he could not forget all that Madeline had been made to suffer during these past days.

"Don't be angry, Robert," said madam, and her voice was slow and pathetic now, "don't be angry! I have been thinking a good deal since I quarrelled with you last night. I could not sleep, so I had nothing else to do—thinking—thinking! I have remembered that I am an old, old woman; I cannot expect to stay here much longer, but you mustn't hate me during the time I have left. Oh, my boy! my boy! Don't let him be angry with me, Madeline! Come here and kiss me—show him that, at all events, we two do not mean to quarrel."

As Madeline hurried impulsively forward madam stretched out her dainty white hand and pulled the blushing creature down on her knees beside the chair. Then she kissed the smooth forehead, and let her fingers rest caressingly among the soft brown curls.

"Tell him we don't mean to quarrel, Maddy, love," she said.

"No, dear madam, no; indeed we shall not," cried the girl.

"Maybe I have seemed hard and cruel," continued madam; "but you must both forgive me, because I meant to do what was right. I did, Robert, though you thought it was all obstinacy and pride. Suppose

I were to die while you are gone. I am tough enough and strong enough, but I may die any day, all the same, for I'm an old, old woman; you'd be sorry then, boy, and it would be too late. Ah, you don't know what it is to be sorry too late!"

Robert was also beside her now, close to Madeline, both looking up in madam's face and speaking incoherent words of love and gratitude.

"I am not so black as you thought me," she said, with a still softer smile. "Well, well, you're a pair of silly children; but, oh me! it's nice to be young and silly! I was so once, Maddy, ugly and wrinkled and old as I look. I wasn't too well used, Madeline—they were all against me—fate, my family—all. I wonder I made as good a woman as I did! I loved one cousin, and they married me to another, and poor Robert (I had you named after him, boy) went off to sea, and got himself drowned. That's all my history: no matter how others told it, that was the truth."

She sat just under the portrait of the dead and gone Robert, and told this falsehood just beneath the picture of the man whom her treachery had driven forth, mad and desperate.

There was one grain of truth in the whole. She had loved him—the one human being except this second Robert whom she had ever loved, wife and mother though she had been. But she let him go. She found that the grandfather had left the vast Stukely wealth to the other cousin and she married that cousin secretly, and when the old man was found dead in his bed Robert learned that he was both disinherited and betrayed by the woman he had worshipped. And of all the world Robert alone had grounds to suspect whose hand mixed the draught the dead man was believed to have swallowed by accident. But he held his peace and went his way. And still another thing, he loved the beautiful woman to the hour of his death; and those who had survived from the awful shipwreck in which he showed himself so brave and tranquil

said that the last words on his lips were a prayer for some woman named Constance; and so he passed "to where beyond these voices there is peace."

Perhaps such exceptional natures are sent into this world just to give us poor blind mortals a faint conception of what the limitless sweep of heavenly forgiveness may mean and comprise.

"That was the truth," repeated madam. "A dull, old story, but you both have wit enough to understand why I told it."

Madeline was weeping softly, and there were tears in Robert's eyes. Old madam smiled complacently, as a great actress might who found that "her point" had been successful.

"And now, to come away down through all the years to you two," said she. "Robert, you're a rebellious, ungrateful young fellow! How dare you thwart the old woman? I wished you to marry Miss Gray. You neglect your opportunities, throw away your chances. Back you come here to find Madeline grown up, more beautiful than she had any business to be. What do you mean by it, miss? You go and fall in love with her, have the impudence to tell me you have loved her ever since you were two babies, as if you were anything else now! Naturally I fly into a passion, rail at you, and abuse Madeline."

Now she looked straight at Robert, but he did not flinch; his face was full enough of pride, but it was not the sort that such a thrust could disturb.

Madam's eyes wandered away to a portrait, hanging at a little distance, that of one Ralph Stukely, a second cousin of Robert's, who had been killed in a duel years ago.

"Well, I have changed my mind," she continued, slowly, "or rather it has been changed for me."

She paused and bent her head in deep thought while a curious smile played across her lips.

"Madeline," she asked, suddenly, "did you ever think it odd that I should have always treated you differently from what your station gave you a right to expect? I sent you away to be educated and accomplished, you know; in fact, did almost as much for you as I could have done for my own daughter. I only thought of your kindness, dear madam," faltered Madeline.

"It was a debt," madam said, in a low, hoarse voice. "I had only suspicions. I would not verify them. Last night I went over all the old letters and papers. I never had the courage to do it before."

Robert was about to interrupt. She put up her hand.

"Be still," said she. "Boy, look at the portraits. Who is it that Madeline is like?"

Again her eagle eyes wandered back to Ralph's picture; Robert's glance followed hers.

"Oh, you see it," said she. "Do you understand?"

Madeline had turned deathly white. Robert rose and passed his arm about her waist to support her.

"I don't know what you mean, grandmother," he said, "but you need not tell me now."

"I'm old," she muttered. "I may die to-night—who knows? I mustn't leave a wrong unrighted. I—"

She shivered and huddled herself down in her chair, looking feeble and ancient; her very voice had grown quavering and old.

"What was I saying? Is my mind beginning to go?"

"Grandmother!" exclaimed Robert, but there was no anger in his accents now, nothing but terror.

"Be still," she said again. "A wrong—a great wrong! I withdraw my opposition. I bid you marry her. She is Ralph Stukely's daughter. Marry her—marry—"

A low moan interrupted her broken words. It came from Madeline's lips. The girl had slipped from her lover's clasp and fallen senseless on the floor, her head resting first at madam's feet.

"You have murdered her," cried Robert, vehemently. "Oh, you wicked woman! You—"

"I am old!" whimpered madam. "It wouldn't take much to kill me. A few harsh words would be enough, boy; speak them if you like. I had to tell. I meant it for the best. I love you. I'm old—old!"

She shivered and shook, while Robert raised Madeline, calling her name wildly.

He was utterly helpless and dazed between fright and anger. And the old lion's head watched him, and the old murderous smile was on the lips still.

"I love her. She is mine—mine," cried Robert, glaring at madam, and then frantically kissing Madeline. "My wife—my darling!"

And Madeline, opening her eyes, was greeted by those words, and gradually came to herself again.

"Marry her, in spite of everything, will he?" muttered madam to herself, looking on. "Marry her, eh? He gets all that from his mother. No real Stukely would have held her after what I told him to-night. Not one of them but would sooner have torn his own heart out, if there was no other way of getting rid of his love. Just like his mother. I'm glad I tormented her. I wish I had done more. I wish the young whelp had died with her. And I love him, and he's all I have; the last Stukely—the last!"

She gathered her heavy dressing-gown closer about her, and pulled her chair up to the fire. It was late in May, and the night warm; but madam shivered as if with a mortal chill.

A crayon head of the dead Robert hung over the mantel, and looked down at her with its sorrowful, loving eyes. She stretched out her arms toward the portrait and groaned; but the agony which had lain at her heart for so many, many years, and the love which had gone with her from girlhood into her prime and on to her old age, did not soften her in the least.

Beginning away back with her first sin, there was nothing she would not have done again had the same motives impelled her.

She told herself this to-night, even while she moaned and cried, "I loved you, Robert—I loved you!"

And Madelaine, in her little chamber, down in the cottage of the gardener, her uncle, was keeping vigil, too, asking for strength to bear the burden which had been cast upon her; thanking Heaven, also, for the great happiness vouchsafed her; begging that she might not be allowed wickedly to repine, because her father's and mother's sin must leave for ever a bitter memory and a corroding thought underlying her content.

When madam would permit her to depart Robert had gone with her to the cottage, and left her at the door.

Old Prudence, who had taken charge of the little house ever since Madelaine could remember, was in bed; but Uncle Christopher sat smoking his pipe, over the dying embers of the kitchen fire. He did not look up as she entered; he was a morose, sullen, taciturn man, who had few sympathies.

Madelaine walked up to the hearth, and stood near his chair; but he only puffed out a thicker cloud of smoke, as if to make a partition between them.

"I have been up at the house with madam," she said.

"Then there were two of you to hatch mischief, and one woman can do enough in that line by herself," returned Uncle Christopher.

But Madelaine was not to be rebuffed. She wanted to know more about her mother. Neither he nor Prudence, though that latter personage was garrulous enough as a rule, had ever talked of her. But perhaps now, when Uncle Christopher learned that she knew the truth, he would come out of his silence.

"Madam has told me," she said, abruptly, "about my mother."

"Then I should think you'd heard enough for one night, so you had better go to bed," he retorted.

"Won't you talk to me about her, Uncle Christopher? I want to know what she was like before—before that great sorrow came upon her. Oh, my mother, my poor mother!"

She began to cry, but very quietly.

"Salt water won't wash out the past," said Uncle Christopher. "Go you to bed, you little watering-pot. I'll not talk or be talked to. Ask me another question, and I'll clear out for good and all. What were women made for, I wonder? Now go."

So Madelaine went away to her chamber, carrying both her grief and her joy as an offering in her prayers; and thus both became sanctified and holy.

Robert Stukely did not set out at once upon his journey; he claimed three days' grace, and madam was too wise to offer any opposition.

Then Madelaine was ill for a little season, so that, altogether, June had come before he departed.

Almost four months elapsed before Stukely Manor again greeted his eyes.

Once during that time he had received news from home, letters both from Madelaine and madam. Madelaine was full of hope and content, and wrote that madam was so loving and kind to her that she could have courage to bear the dreary weeks of waiting.

It was toward the close of a day late in September that Robert Stukely rode up the long avenue to his own mansion—really and truly his own now, for the term of his tutelage, which had continued several years beyond his legal majority, had terminated during his absence; and old madam's impetuous way was ended, save so far as might regard her personal influence over her grandson.

Some one of the servants caught sight of him, and a shout of joyful greeting rose, which reached old madam, where she sat in the library, looking as stately and proud as ever, just in front of the portrait of the dead-and-gone Robert, whom she had loved so dearly and had so ruthlessly betrayed.

"Is all well?" called the young master, as he flung himself from his horse. "Where is madam?"

Not waiting for answers, he hurried down the hall to the library, for madam's habits resembled the laws of the Medes and the Persians in their fixedness, and he had no need to ask where he should find her.

He opened the door. Madam started up with a shriek—shrank back, putting her hands before her face—then threw herself into his arms, crying.

"Oh, my boy! my boy! I sent Jarvis to meet you. If I could have died instead of her. I'm old—old. Oh, my Maddy! my Maddy!"

He pushed madam away, and staggered back into a chair, looking like the ghost of the man who had ridden up to the house a moment before. He was as much changed as if crossing the threshold of that room had been the entrance into Hades!

"I didn't hear!" he groaned, incoherently. "It can't be. I didn't hear! Speak to me, grandmother, for Heaven's sake! I—"

He could utter no other pleading; but madam had no need of words to reply; her looks of anguish, her uplifted arms, her inarticulate moans told the whole.

Madelaine had been buried the week previous, out in the old graveyard that lay between the village church and the Manor House.

There was little to learn. Uncle Christopher had disappeared the day of the funeral. Madelaine had never seemed well to madam since that day in the library. It was one evening when Christopher came to tell her the girl was ill, Prudence gone away on a visit to some relatives for the first time within anybody's recollection, the doctor absent.

Madam went down to the cottage herself, armed with her box of medicines, for she had a gift where illness was concerned. It seemed to her heart disease; she had once or twice fancied that Madelaine was threatened with such symptoms. She gave certain narcotics, which afforded relief, and meant in the morning to send to London for the most famous physician the city contained. She had slept herself at the cottage. But when morning came there was nothing more to be done. Madelaine had died in the night.

"Neither able to die nor go mad!"

Robert said the words over and over to himself as he wandered up and down the great house, and in and out of the cottage where Prudence sat, aged and stupefied by her sorrow.

At last he could endure it no longer. The very sight of Stukely Manor became hateful to him. He left everything suddenly, and went abroad.

A quaint old Belgian town, with a great dull square in the midst, and a fountain in the centre of that square, where women in tall white caps and clattering sabots washed their lettuces and chattered in an uncouth patois.

On one side was a gray medieval church, and close beside it a grim, dark convent, with grated windows. This convent turned its back on the square, and had an entrance in a narrow street behind, which led into other narrow streets, each paved with heartless stones and leading away up a steep hill.

This was where Robert Stukely found himself after a year of pilgrimage.

One day, as he was returning from a long ramble among the hills, he strolled into a little Lutheran chapel outside the walls.

The old sacristan pounced upon him, eager to earn a few sous, and, muttering in his almost unintelligible dialect something about wonderful things which the stranger ought to see, dragged him forth to a side door and landed him in the midst of a cemetery.

Robert was hurrying away when his foot struck against a mound; he stumbled and fell. As he raised himself his glance caught the inscription upon the slab, at the head of the grave. He read:

Here lies the body of

CHRISTOPHER NOYSE,

Born in Scotland in the year 1729.

Died at Beaulieu July 7th, 1791.

Thus much, in addition, he learned from the Lutheran clergyman:

Uncle Christopher had come thither during the previous winter, and the people with whom he lodged were known to the pastor, Noyse had been ailing from the first, was gloomy and taciturn, seeming to the minister a man oppressed by some heavy secret. One summer morning he was found dead in his room; from heart disease, the physicians said.

There were no papers of consequence found among his effects, beyond a certificate of his birth, and documents relating to certain sums of money invested in English funds.

A week later arrived the festival of some saint, whose memory was much venerated in those parts. The convent church was gorgeous with flowers and lights, and was filled with a kneeling crowd, while the voices of the nuns, hidden behind the grating of their gallery, floated through the vaulted aisles like echoes of angel-music ringing down from a higher sphere.

Robert Stukely had gone to the festival, but soon grew weary of the lengthened ceremonial, and, noticing that a door, half-concealed by a great pillar, stood ajar, he passed out, and found himself in a square court, three sides of which were formed by the dark walls of the convent.

Away in the farthest angle a lay sister sat knitting in the sun, unconsciously making a picture of herself as she dozed over her task.

Robert suddenly remembered a famous painting, which hung in one of the convent chapels, and was shown to strangers occasionally by special permission; and that permission he had in his pocket, along with a wondrously polite letter from some high dignitary of the church, whose acquaintance he had formed at Brussels.

The young man crossed to the corner, where the lay sister sat, and she, abruptly roused from her tranquil nap, opened wide eyes of astonishment at his approach.

He proffered his request, and showed the bishop's letter. But the nun shook her head. It was a fast day, she reminded him; monsieur must come again.

Naturally, now that it was not easy to do, he felt exceedingly anxious to see the picture at once; and presently, the nun discovered that English was his native tongue, and she burst into it with great volubility, proving to be an Irishwoman who had lived from girlhood to middle age in the old Belgian convent.

Between her satisfaction at hearing her own language spoken, and the courage she derived from a shining gold piece which he slipped into her hand, Sister Ursula's scruples gave way.

"The mother superior and her whole flock were in the church," she said, "and would remain there for a long time yet; if the young gentleman would content himself with a brief look, the visit might be managed."

She led him in, accordingly, through long dark corridors, whose stone flags echoed strangely beneath their tread, talking all the while as fast as if she were trying to indemnify herself for the years of enforced silence, till at last they reached the chapel.

A curtain hung before the chancel screen; the sister drew it aside; then uttered a cry of dismay. A woman, in the dress of a novice, was kneeling at the altar.

"Come away!" cried the nun. "The Virgin help me! I forgot! It is the English girl. She is doing penance. For the love of the saints come away!"

But the novice had risen. She had turned towards them.

For an instant Robert Stukely believed that he was dead, or that he had met a ghost, for the face he saw was the face of his lost Madelaine, and the voice that, at sight of his, called his name, was Madelaine's own.

It would be full two hours before the services in the church would end. There was ample time for Stukely's quick wit to form and carry out a plan of escape.

Old Ursula, the lay sister, had never been a willing nun, and the thought of freedom was very sweet to her.

At this moment escape was simple, easy even, so far as getting out of their prison was concerned. Ursula had the keys of the presses in which the wardrobes of the boarders in the school attached to the convent were kept, garments which would not even be looked for until with the coming of vacation they should be needed.

It was not an hour later that two veiled women passed, unnoticed, through the crowd of worshippers in the church, went out by the great doors, and entered a carriage which stood waiting on the opposite side of the square.

Away across Belgium, swift almost as the wind. In a few hours the sea was reached, traversed, and their feet were on English soil, before either of the three fugitives could realize that the flight was real.

Meantime, this was all that Madelaine could reveal in regard to the mystery which had enshrouded her so long.

She remembered waking in the night, and finding madam and Uncle Christopher beside her bed. She was told that she had been very ill, and that she

quest neither talk nor stir. She recollected a strange odour in the room, and that she began to feel dizzy. She tried to speak, and then to lift her hand, but either was impossible. The two figures she was mechanically watching seemed to float away in the distance: a white mist appeared to gather all about her; a sound filled her ears, like the deafening boom of a mighty bell; then she knew nothing more.

Madeline was on the ocean when consciousness returned. Uncle Christopher sat by her berth. He treated her kindly enough, but she could gain no explanation. All he said was:

"If you refuse to do exactly as I bid you will be the cause of my death. Even where I am I am not safe! Safe? Why, I shall hardly be that in my grave, if I fall in what I have to do."

But even if this appeal had produced no effect on Madeline, she found, long before the weary weeks which the voyage consumed were over, that she could hope for no human aid.

She was believed mad by the captain and crew; believed mad by all who came near her during the journey which succeeded their landing; her uncle told everybody she was mad, and everybody believed him.

She had been taken to the convent, and forced to assume the novice's dress.

Once Uncle Christopher paid her a visit, but all her prayers were unavailing. She only received for answer:

"You are safe here; you might have been worse off had you been left to your own devices; remember your mother, and be content that you can save your soul. I'll leave it all written; let me alone. I can't die yet—I can't die yet."

Death came so suddenly that the old man had no time to leave the promised record. Nor into whose hands his secret might have fallen could it have served any purpose; for in those days no law was strong enough to open a cloister door when it had once closed between a captive and the outer world.

Old madam sat in her spacious library. It was evening. She sat in the light of the great chandeliers, arrayed in rich velvet and costly lace, glittering with all the Stukely diamonds, brought out of their hiding-place for the first time in years.

She was awaiting Robert Stukely and his wife. Her grandson had written to her. News had this day reached madam that the vessel which was bearing them home had been signalled; and that they would arrive at the Manor to-night.

Old Robert stood on the wharf when the ship landed, and the letter which he placed in Robert's hands was, to the young man's surprise, full of congratulations and welcome.

"I had not hoped for this," he said to Madeline. "But she gives us her blessing. She says she loves us both. We shall at last be happy."

Madam had written a long letter of explanation, which Robert and Madeline read together. So far as the terrible mystery went, madam said she could but repeat what she had at first told her grandson. She had been sent for to the cottage in the middle of the night; had seen Madeline very ill. When she awoke in the morning Christopher told her that the girl was dead. She had gone home at once; had kept her bed for days. Her servants and several of the village people had attended the funeral. No suspicion, madam added, had ever crossed her mind. Why should there? She could only account for the terrible act by one hypothesis; Christopher had not believed that Robert Stukely would ever make Madeline his wife, and had determined at all hazards to snatch her from the fate which had befallen his unhappy sister! Hence he had pretended she had died.

"We have been unjust to her," said Robert.

The sound of carriage wheels reached madam as she sat in the library; hurried steps along the corridor were heard; the door opened; the young pair were in her arms, and she was crying:

"My children! My children! At last! At last!"

When they could at length get down to the level of commonplace madam was full of tender, hospitable cares. But they had dined, they said, upon the road.

"Then Madeline shall have some tea," madam said. "Child, you remember my tea? It used to be your holiday treat when you were a little thing. Ah, come and kiss me again; that I may be sure it is real! My children! my children! I don't dare to talk—I don't dare to think! I might die of joy! I am old—old!"

But before they had the tea she must see and thank the good Ursula, to whom they owed so much. Then she would have Robert show Madeline her rooms; and Madeline must gratify grandmamma's

whim, and come down dressed in white, that she might indeed look like a bride.

Twice as she reached the door she called them back.

"Only to be sure that it is real," she said. "Now let me rest a little. I might die of joy! I am so old—so old!"

They left her, and presently madam rang the silver bell on the table before her, and at her bidding the butler brought in the tea-service, which one of the former Stukelys had caused to be manufactured for his new wife, marvellous sea-tinted china, and painted on each cup a lion's head, holding open red, hungry-looking jaws, with fierce eyes, which made one think of madam's own.

She arranged the service upon the silver salver, took from her bosom a tiny scent-bottle, opened it, shook two drops of the colourless liquid into one of the cups, and then laughed again.

"I am old, old," she muttered, "but fate has never beaten me yet; and it shall not now. Ralph Stukely's daughter shall never take my place. Of all human beings he was the one I hated most. I'll have my vengeance here, and take my hatred on into eternity. There's not a stain along the whole line. I'll not have her baby face bring one now."

Another moment and the husband and wife were in the room once more, Madeline robed in white, as madam had desired.

Robert brought the kettle from the hearth, and madam made the tea, in the dainty fashion in which she did all things; the priceless diamonds that decked her fingers and wrists gleaming in the lamplight till her white hands looked as if ringed with flame.

She filled the three cups. The one intended for Madeline was set in the middle. She was about to offer it, when some hasty movement dislodged the little bottle from her dress, and it fell to the ground. She said to Robert:

"It is only my scent-bottle, just here by my foot. Don't stir; I'm always in agony lest some accident should befall my precious china—yours now, Madeline, child."

Madam stooped to recover the flask. As she did so Robert mechanically put out his hand and set the cup nearest him before Madeline; in the same unconscious way pushing the middle cup, into which madam had poured the liquid, down to the place before occupied by the one he handed his wife.

Madam found her flask. She glanced at the table. Madeline was sipping her tea. With his own hand (this was madam's thought) Robert had dealt the blow. He had given his wife the poisoned cup.

"Now I shall drink my tea," said madam, and took one of the remaining cups, that which held death. "This is your cup," and she handed the other to Robert, who took it, kissing her hand as he did so; for he believed implicitly the tale she had told in her letter, in regard to Uncle Christopher, and had no suspicion now of her guilt.

There they sat, talking gaily, madam listening with interest to Robert's account of the homeward voyage, though she kept her eyes fixed on Madeline's face.

Suddenly she put her hand to her heart, and a gray pallor settled over her features.

"You are ill!" exclaimed Madeline.

Madam looked at her, and smiled, while an awful expression, made up of rage and pain, dilated her eyes.

"What is it, grandmother?" asked Robert.

Her gaze wandered to him, and then went back to Madeline.

"It is nothing," she answered. "Too much joy—only that. Call Elsie; I must go to bed."

Smiling still, she waited until her attendant came, spoke pleasant words of good night, and went her way.

"Go out," she said to the attendant, when they reached her chamber.

She sat down, alone, in the silence. The face of the dead-and-gone Robert gazed at her from the mantel.

She writhed and shook in mortal agony, but not a moan escaped her lips. With a last, powerful effort she took the little bottle from her bosom, threw it into the fire and heaped the coals above it, then sank into her chair again.

"Did you hinder me, Robert?" she asked, raising her eyes to the picture. "Well, fate has beaten me at last, but I don't yield. I'll battle beyond the grave. So near, and yet to fall! The first plan seemed so certain—who would have dreamed that he could find her in that living tomb?"

She crouched lower in her chair, as a fresh spasm of pain shook her from head to foot. Her wild eyes wandered about, trying to pierce the shadows.

"Is it you, come at last, Robert?" she said, aloud. "Is the old man Stukely there? Christopher believed that it was he who poisoned the old man by

mistake; that was the way I kept my power over him. I told him he should hang, long ago as it all happened, if he did not take the girl away."

She was quiet for a little, then a low groan broke from her.

"Why did they put the lights out?" she gasped. "It is cold—cold! What is that road, yonder? Must I go? Not that way—not that! Robert—Robert—Oh—"

Another groan, and all was still.

When Elsie entered the chamber the next morning her shrieks raised the whole household.

There madam sat, in the light of the falling lamps, dressed yet in her velvet and jewels, her white hands clutching the arms of her chair, her glazed eyes staring up at the portrait of the man she had loved; but her soul had gone to its "own place," and her secret had perished with her. She had kept it even unto death. F. L. B.

FACETIÆ.

A MAN OF LETTERS.—Admiral Ross.—*Fun.*

MOTTO FOR THE MIDLAND RAILWAY.—"Nulli secundus." Second-class for nobody.—*Punch.*

CLEVER BOY.—Little Georgie shirked his spelling lessons at W. He feared that he might come to Want.—*Fun.*

WHAT OUR TAILOR LOOKS OUT FOR IN THE "CITY ARTICLE."—The Rates of Continuation(s).—*Fun.*

THE Moustache Movement.

Beardless: "Now, girls, it's a secret, but I'll tell you. I mean to let my beard and moustaches grow!"

THE GREAT CAN STOOP WITHOUT LOWERING THEMSELVES.—Loaf for a Friend (over tub): "Proud d'ye call him? You don't know him then. Why, he won his last fight, Bob did; and yet he'll drink half a quart with anybody almost."—*Judy.*

GROSS NEGLECT OF DUTY.

Sunday School Teacher: "What did your god-fathers and godmothers then for you?"

Sunday School Dancer: "Nothing at all, miss—neither then nor since."—*Punch.*

CELESTIAL COLD SHOULDER.—A correspondent suggests, as explanation of the late severe weather, that Venus has been flirting with the sun, and creating a coolness between him and the earth.—*Punch.*

IMPECUNIOUS JOGULARITY.

District Visitor: "Well, Smithers, how did you spend Christmas?"

Smithers: "Didn't spend it. Ain't spent anything for these three weeks, wuss luck."—*Fun.*

BROWN.

(By One who has been Done So.) You say that Brown's unprincipled.

Though you admire his jollity: You're wrong. He has much principle, More quantity than quality.—*Judy.*

A NICE DISTINCTION.

Sunday Visitor: "What is that boy of yours playing at, Mrs. Mullington?"

The Vicar's Wife: "Oh, well, of course he can't have his ball to play with on Sundays, so we let him have the sofa-cushion to kick!"—*Punch.*

GAINING HIS POINT.—A four-year-old saw his parents preparing for church, and asked them to take him along with them. He was told that he was too little, and must wait till he should grow bigger. "Well," returned he, "you'd better take me now, for when I get bigger I may not want to go." The parents saw the point; he was taken.

NOBLESSÉ GELIGE.

Shobkins (who loves a real live lord): "Good mornin', my lord; 'ope your lordship enjoyed our little bit of dinner the other day. We 'ope to see you again soon."

Lord Dinout: "Thank you, thank you, very much; but—ah—quite forgot your name, and in looking my engagements I like to know to whom I am engaged."—*Fun.*

ONE FOR HIM.

Nice Little Girl: "Oh, Mr. Brown, give me one of the fish you've been catching."

Brown (who rather fancies himself, and does all he can to keep up the character): "I haven't been fishing, my dear; I've been for a row."

Nice Little Girl: "Why, Emily was looking at you through a telescope, and said you did nothing but catch crabs."

[Brown retires, smiling painfully.]

LEADING, BUT NOT LED.—Shocking inhumanity is reported from one of our chief seats of learning. We are told on excellent authority that "Mr. C. D. Shafston, who was expected to be the leading member of Cambridge next year, fell on the kerbstones between Jesus and Trinity colleges, and now lies in a precarious state." The future leading member of Cambridge—whatever that may be—might far

humanity's sake have been led home. This is the result of over-educating the people.—*Fun.*

THE YOUNG IDEA.

A boy was reading of the curious skin of an elephant.

"Did you ever see an elephant's skin?" asked his teacher.

"I have," shouted a little six-year-old, at the foot of the class.

"Where?" said the preceptor, quite amused at his earnestness.

"On the elephant," said he, with a provoking grin.

IMPERTINENT QUESTIONS.

To ask a lawyer if he ever told a lie.

To ask an unmarried lady how old she is.

To ask a doctor how many persons he has killed.

To ask a clergyman whether he ever did anything wrong.

To ask a policeman how much cold mutton he gets through at a sitting.

To ask a shopkeeper whether he ever cheated anybody.

To ask a young lady whether she would like to be married.

To ask a cabman how many persons he has run over.

To ask the Pope whether he is infallible, and if so how it feels.—*Judy.*

THE MUFFIN-MAN.

(A Lyric of the Lowly.)

Through the wet and cold comes our muffin-man

bold,

With his tinkering symbol of peace,

Hark! his rough, roopy voice makes my cockles

rejoice.

May his muddy old shadow increase!

Bright visions arise when his tray meets my

eyes

Of the fire-side and sunniest pile.

In a season like this oleaginous bliss

Is controlled but by thoughts of the bill.

Small poets may note on the nightingale's note,

On the organ's melodious swell;

But mine be the boast that what pleases me

most

Is the sound of the muffin-man's bell.—*Fun.*

AT A REGISTRAR'S OFFICE.

"What's your name?"

"John Burton."

"What are you?"

"Farmer."

"I mean, are you a bachelor?"

"No; I'm a plain farmer."

"Yes; but what's your condition?"

"Middlin'."

"Have you been married before?"

"No."

"Then you are a bachelor."

"You know best, sir, I deesay."

"Is your intended wife a spinster?"

"No; not aite."

"A widow, then?"

"No, she baint'."

"But she must be one—is she a spinster?"

"No; she knows naught of spinning."

"Is she a single woman?"

"Yes, she be."

"Then she is a spinster."

"You know best, sir, I deesay."

[And yet they say Government officials are all

overpaid].—*Judy.*

A KNOW-SOMETHING PUPIL.

A big lump of a boy, on his first examination, was

asked if he could read.

Boy: "Don't know."

Teacher: "Can't you spell easy words?"

Boy: "Don't know."

Teacher: "Do you know the alphabet?"

Boy: "Yes."

Teacher: "Try this word."

Boy: "H-o-r-s-e."

Teacher: "What does that spell?"

Boy: "Don't know."

Teacher: "What do you ride on at home?"

Boy: "Oxen."

Teacher: "Try this word."

Boy: "B-r-a-d."

Teacher: "What does that spell?"

Boy: "Don't know."

Teacher: "What do you eat at home?"

Boy: "Pumpkin."

Teacher: "Try this short word."

Boy: "B-a-d."

Teacher: "What does that spell?"

Boy: "Don't know."

Teacher: "What do you sleep on at night?"

Boy: "Sheeps-kine."

FREE V. FREEDOM.—A Scotch paragraph, relating

to some fire-raising at Coupar Fife, after stating

the name of the offender and the nature of the offence, concludes rather singularly. It says, "by which about a ton of the material was burnt, and part of the house destroyed, and sent to prison for thirty days." We sincerely trust the landlord didn't object. Anyhow, it is a singular way of insuring a residence from farther annoyance, and to our roving tastes seems a remedy even worse than the disease.—*Fun.*

PINS AND NEEDLES.

(From Judy's Work-box.)

The directors of the Midland Railway announce that they intend to supply their third-class passengers with cushioned seats and foot-warmers in cold weather. Really the third-class passenger is getting a deal of consideration in these days. At their next meeting the directors will probably consider the advisability of opening refreshment buffets at all stopping-places, with beer and brandy and water gratis.—*Judy.*

PITIFUL SOUNDS OF WINTER.

COLD! how cold!

Black and chill is the frosty air,
Grim and gaunt are the branches bare
That stretch from the trees around;
Not a sound of bird is fluttering by,
Save the woodpecker's tap and the Phoebe's cry,
Or the twitter of sparrows who downwards fly,
To hop on the frozen ground.
Oh, a pitiful sound! a pitiful sound!
Has the twitter of birds from the frozen ground.

Dark! how dark!

Sunless and dark this wintry day;
Cold the clouds, and heavy and gray,
That hang o'er the sky like a pall;
There is snow in the air. Yes! a flake flew
past;
A wide cover of white o'er the earth is cast.
Creeping, and heaping, and gathering so fast,
Though we never can hear it fall.
Now a pitiful sound we will hear, I know,
When poverty's tread presses down the white
snow.

Fast! how fast!

White and pure is the snowy line
That reaches the church with its ivy vine,
And clings to the graveyard's edge.
Hark! the curfew's knell, and a funeral train
From the graves come creeping slow, creeping
again,
While a weary sob tells a mother's pain,
For her child lies under the snow.
A pitiful sound has that low, weary wail,
Telling so sadly its heart-broken tale.

Winds rise now!

Mutterings low are everywhere!
Wind-driven snow-flakes flood the air!
Dark, scudding clouds above I see!
The grand old oak seems to creak, grind, and
groan,
While the tall, whistling elm takes a sharp,
shrill tone,
And the hules of the pine shiver, tremble and
moan;
The wind has a voice for each tree.
Oh, a pitiful sound we will ever find
In the weird, weary sigh of the muttering
wind!
E. T.

GEMS.

WHEREVER we drink too deeply of pleasures we find a sediment at the bottom which pollutes and embitters what we relished at first.

HAPPINESS is like manna; it is to be gathered in grains, and enjoyed every day. It will not keep; it cannot be accumulated; nor have we to go out of ourselves nor into remote places to gather it, since it has rained down from Heaven, at our very doors, or rather within them.

There is not in human nature a more odious disposition than a proneness to contempt, which is a mixture of pride and ill-nature. Nor is there any which more certainly denotes a bad mind; for in a good and benign temper there can be no room for this emotion. That which constitutes an object of contempt to the malevolent becomes the object of other passions to a worthy and good-natured man; for in such a person wickedness, and vice must raise hatred and abhorrence, and weakness and folly will be sure to excite compassion; so that he will find no object of his contempt in all the actions of men.

THE AUTOGRAPH MANIA.—Autograph mania is as fierce as ever in Paris, and the most recent scrap of the handwriting of a celebrity commands an extravagant price. At a recent sale of autographs an historical

sketch by Bossuet was sold for 15*l.* 15*s.*; two letters from Leibnitz, relating respectively to the Councils of Bâle and Trent, fetched 7*l.* and 2*l.*; an epistle of Louis XVI. to the Comte de Broglie, brought 6*l.* 15*s.*, and one from Mirabeau 2*l.* 10*s.*

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

NEW ZEALAND METHOD OF COOKING FOWLS ON FISH.—Take some wet clay and encase the fish or fowl, with the skin on, in it. Place in the hot embers or among stones heated by fire. Let it remain until the clay cracks, when it will be found well cooked. The skin will adhere to the clay, and the steam being retained the meat will be wonderfully sweet and full of gravy. The Maories roll leaves of the flax-plant round eels before cooking them in clay, but there is no advantage gained in doing so.

FINING WINE.—Kaolin, or china-clay, has recently been recommended as a convenient material for use in fining wine. A quantity of kaolin, amounting to about a half per cent. of the weight of wine to be operated on, is mixed to a pappy consistency with a small quantity of wine, and this is then added to the bulk of the liquor to be clarified, when the impurities in suspension are caught up by the finely divided clay, and rapidly thrown down as an insoluble deposit. Should the kaolin contain iron as an impurity it must be digested with dilute hydrochloric acid, every trace of acid being, of course, washed out before the material is used in clarifying.

STATISTICS.

THE PERUVIAN GUANO FIELDS.—According to the report of the guano surveys, the following quantities of the articles appear: In Chipana, 89,500 cubic metres; in Huancillo, 700,000; Panto de Lobos, 1,801,000; Pabellon de Pica, 5,000,000; Chonabaya, 158,000; Patate, 125,000; Patillo, 15,000—total 7,980,500 cubic metres of guano, giving, according to Thierry's calculation, 7,500,000 tons, or, according to the report of Mr. Hindles, the engineer appointed to revise the data submitted by the commission, one-third less.

MISCELLANEOUS.

It is said that the Emperor of Russia has purchased the rising house or palace at Kensington for the sum of 780,000*l.* for the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh.

A CENTENARIAN.—A miser named Martingale, who has attained the ripe age of 103 years, recently appeared at the Crown Office, Colerford, Forest of Dean, and made an application for a sale.

DEATH OF KARL HESS.—The death is announced at Munich, at the age of seventy-five, of the well-known Bavarian geese and animal painter, Karl Hess.

THE NATIONAL GIFT TO GARIBALDI.—The Italian Chamber of Deputies, on December 19th, passed the bill bestowing a national gift upon Garibaldi by 207 votes against 26. The Chamber was prorogued until the 14th of February.

AN OLD INN.—The oldest inn in Vienna—the "Wild Man Hotel" in the Kärntnerstrasse—which has stood since the fourteenth century, that is to say, for more than 500 years, is about to be swept away.

SALE OF FRENCH THEATRES.—Three Paris theatres, forming part of the estate of Madame Chabré, a wealthy lady recently deceased, have just been sold by auction. The Ambigu-Comique, put up at 800,000*fr.*, brought 1,055,000*fr.*; and an adjoining building 80,050*fr.*. The Variétés, offered at 700,000*fr.*, went for 810,000*fr.*, and the Montmartre for 122,000*fr.*

THE BRIGHTON AQUARIUM.—Another novelty which has just been added to the collection of foreign fishes in this aquarium is a fine specimen of the lepidotriton, or mud-fish, from the River Gambila. It is about 14 inches in length, and is in good health. This curious animal may be seen in a tank in the entrance-hall.

ROBINSON CRUSOE'S ISLAND.—Robinson Crusoe's Island, in the South Pacific Ocean, is now peopled by a German colony of about seventy souls, who landed on its shores in 1892. On their arrival they found large flocks of goats, thirty half-wild horses, about sixty asses, and a number of other domestic animals. They brought with them cows, hogs, fowls, farming utensils, small boats, and fishing tackle.

WHAT EVERY ONE DOES NOT KNOW.—Religious sects are said to number about 800 in the world. We give the dates when a few began:—Anabaptists, 1525; Antichrists, 1538; Armenians, 1229; Arians, 290; Begging Friars, 1587; Brownists, 1660; Calvinists, 1546; Dominicans, 1215; Gray Friars, 1122; Jesuits, 1526; Lutherans, 1517; Methodists, 1734; Moravians, 1457.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

CAMBER.—You should apply to an advertising agent; a list of these agents is published in the London Directory.

KIO.—You had better make application to an agent for foreign newspapers, who could doubtless put you in the way of accomplishing your object.

T. T. B.—The same process which has already given you a portion of your wages will, when put in motion, give you the remainder if you can prove your claim.

J. H.—Love is not slow to find out a way. You may trust it to do that. The real difficulty is to produce or inspire the love. For that we have no specific to offer.

GEO. W.—There is no book published on the subject; neither is there any definite rule observed. You may, however, safely conclude that the parties, upon consideration, do not desire to proceed farther in the matter.

THO.—Yes, there was a Julius Caesar, an author, but it would be impossible to confuse him with the illustrious Roman. The eras in which they respectively flourished were too widely apart for that. Whilst the importance of the one man in the world's history and the insignificance of the other would render error well nigh impossible.

CLARA.—The isothermal lines are not coincident with the parallels of latitude. Other causes beside distance from the equator operate in determining the temperature of different parts of the globe. Altitude, presence or absence of forests or deserts, proximity to the ocean, etc., are all modifying causes. Consult a good physical atlas, of which there are several.

HARRY B.—Not having an opportunity of hearing the other side we decline to express an opinion on the matter. We suggest, however, that you should personally call at the office to which the money was sent; there you should explain the idea that was present to your mind when you sent the money, and ask that it should be returned to you if it appear that you misapprehended the terms of the advertisement to which you refer.

FAIR ANNE OF ENGLAND.—1. The trade-winds are winds which are met with in the tropical regions of the earth, that is, regions of the earth's surface on either side of the equator which may be estimated roughly at about one-half of the earth's entire surface. The trade-winds blow in a north-easterly and south-easterly direction as distinguished from the anti-trades, which are south-westerly and north-westerly winds. The trade-winds are said to be caused by the sun's direct action on the atmosphere and by the rotation of the earth upon its axis. As you ask for details, we quote Sir John Herschel's description of the matter. He says: "The immediate effect of the application of heat to any region is to generate an ascensional movement in the incumbent atmosphere, a bodily overflowing of its material above, and a relief of barometrical pressure below. The air of the cooler surrounding region not being so relieved (but rather the contrary, owing to the increase of the weight poured on it from above) will be driven in by the difference of hydrostatic pressure so arising, and thus originate two distinct winds, an upper one setting outward from the heated region, a lower inward. If the region heated be a limited one these currents will radiate from and to it as a centre; if a linear tract, or a whole zone of the globe, such as the generally heated intertropical region, they will assume the character of two sheets of air setting inwards on both sides below, uniting and flowing vertically upwards along the medial line, and again separating aloft, and taking on a reversed movement. In this account of the production of wind, however, no account is taken of the earth's rotation on its axis, which modifies all the phenomena, and gives their peculiar character to all the great aerial currents which prevail over the globe. The first clear perception and announcement of this cause, as affording an explanation of the trade-winds (otherwise inexplicable), is due to Hadley (see Philosophical Transactions for the year 1735), and affords a beautiful demonstration of that great astronomical principle as a physical fact. To form a right estimate of its importance it is only necessary to observe that of all the winds which occur over the whole earth, one-half at least, more probably two-thirds, of the average momentum is nothing else than force given out by the globe in its rotation in the trade currents, and in the act of reabsorption or resumption by it from the anti-trades. Since the earth revolves on an axis passing through its poles from west to east, each point in its surface has a rotatory velocity eastward proportional to the radius of its circle of latitude, and any body of air relatively quiescent on that point will have the same. Conceive now such a body to be urged by any impulse in the direction of a meridian towards the equator. Since such impulse communicates to it no increase of easterly velocity, it will find itself, at

each point of its progress, continually more and more deficient in this element of movement, and will lag behind the swifter surface below it, or drag upon it with a relative westerly tendency. In other words, it will no longer be a direct north or south wind, but relatively to the surface over which it is moving will assume continually more and more the character of a north-easterly or south-easterly one, according as it approaches the equator from the north or south. Meanwhile, however, the earth is continually acting on the air by friction, and communicating to it rotatory velocity. As it approaches the equator, in whose vicinity the diurnal circles increase more slowly, the relative westerly tendency is continually less and less reinforced by the cause which produced it, and the counteraction arising from friction acquires energy, till, on arriving near the equator, the wind loses its easterly character altogether; while the northern and southern currents, here meeting and opposing, mutually destroy each other, producing a calm, and become deflected upwards, to form an ascensional current, replacing the air abstracted. The result, then, is the formation of two great tropical belts in the northern of which a north-easterly, and in the southern a south-easterly wind prevails, while the winds in the equatorial belt which separates them are comparatively feeble and free from any steady prevalence of easterly character. This is the general description of the trade-winds as actually observed." 2. The monsoon is a regular or periodical wind, in the Indian seas, blowing constantly in the same direction during six months of the year and in the contrary direction during the remaining six. This wind is produced by what is called the disturbing influence of intensely heated land upon the air in its vicinity. The setting in of the monsoon is usually accompanied by great rain and thunderstorms. 3. Your handwriting appears to be about the same as usual.

TO THE NEW YEAR.

Then let the New Year crowned be
With better, nobler deeds,
And pluck at once from every heart
The bitter, selfish weeds.
Let better, warmer feelings rule
The hard, cold heart within,
With words more mild and ways more kind,
Let this New Year begin.

Then let the New Year crowned be
With every man's good will
Towards his rich or poorer friend,
For all are brothers still.
If one has more than he can use,
And one has need severe,
They're brothers, and as brothers should
Each other's burdens bear.

Then let the New Year crowned be
With duty nobly done,
And duty to be well pursued
Must first be well begun.
Must start right, you cannot fail,
To doubtings give no heed,
But bravely tread the path of right
If ere you would succeed.

LOVE NOR.—1. You are tall enough for your age. 2. The size of your hand is proportionate to your height. 3. It is polite to comply with such a request when made by an influential person. 4. Outward use like soap is beneficial to clear the complexion. 5 and 6. There is no impropriety provided you have the consent of your parents or guardians. 7. It is a matter of taste. We should say you are too young for such a question. 8. About 5 ft. 4 in. is considered a good height for a lady. 9. Yes, if the parents of both parties approve.

LUKE.—1. Your puzzle is perplexing, no doubt. We have no satisfactory solution to offer, unless it is that as enigmas are amusing things it would be a pity to spoil their attendant zest by the publication of a key. Practical endeavours to find the key call into play some small amount of enterprise, ingenuity and industry. Whether the game is worth the play is a question to be decided by the players, though judged by the number and constant succession of persons engaged in this little game it appears to have attraction. 2. Remuneration we apprehend would be paid if the tale were accepted. 3. You must of course send your name and address.

ASTOR.—It would doubtless be practicable for you to construct a reflecting telescope, but you must not expect to find it an easy matter. Of course the main difficulty lies in grinding the speculum to the proper figure. The great Sir William Herschel, who made a number of reflecting telescopes of the Gregorian kind, had not been brought up to the business of an optician, having commenced life as an organist, nevertheless he was a most successful manipulator of specula. It is recorded that he never took his hand from a mirror after he first commenced the critical operation of grinding it. Ample instructions exist in the cyclopaedia. You must, however, remember that specula of silvered glass are superseded by the old metallic mirror.

S. R. P.—1. Great difference of opinion exists as to the relative merits of the harmonium and the American organ, but the latter instrument will certainly answer your purpose best. 2. There can be no comparison instituted between either of the above-named instruments and the regular organ. No instrument which produces its musical tones by means of metallic vibrating reeds can hope to emulate the timbre of instruments either in power or sweetness. 3. The idea of producing continuous sounds from the pianoforte by means of some agency for causing a continuous vibration of the wires is not novel, but has never proved practicable. It is true that the strings of the hurdy-gurdy are agitated by means of a small wheel, but you must surely see the practical difficulties in the way of the application of any such apparatus to the piano.

DICK.—A good blacking for household purposes can be made by mixing with a paste three ounces of ivory-black with half an ounce of sweet oil and two ounces of molasses. Into this pour half an ounce of oil of vitriol, and when well mixed add to it three-quarters of a pint of water in which has been stirred one-quarter of a pint of vinegar. This makes a fine liquid blacking for shoes, boots, belts and the like. Another receipt for blacking

consists of four ounces of ivory-black, half an ounce of Prussian blue, one ounce of sulphate of iron, one ounce of sweet oil, two ounces (two tablespoonfuls) of molasses, and a quart of weak vinegar. Half a tablespoonful of vitriol will give this, and all blackings, a superior brilliancy, but its use is attended with the drawback that it destroys the leather, and also rots the stitches of the articles upon which it is used. Both of these receipts for blacking, however, require friction with a brush to give a bright gloss to the surface on which they are applied. Liquid composition blacking is sold by boot dealers which requires no rubbing to produce a polish, and compositions of this kind can be made by adding a strong solution of gum arabic to either of the above receipts.

LOTTIE, nineteen, fair, good looking, musical, and well educated, wishes to correspond with a gentleman, about twenty-two; a chemist preferred.

LOUIE, eighteen, tall, fair, well educated, musical, and of a loving disposition, wishes to correspond with a gentleman about twenty-three; a clerk preferred.

SOPHIA, tall, dark, good figure, wishes to correspond with a tall, dark young man about twenty, who would value a good wife.

EMILY, twenty, medium height, dark brown hair and eyes, would like to correspond with a steady, industrious young man about twenty-one; a tradesman preferred.

JANE, nineteen, dark hair and eyes, medium height, domesticated, her own milliner and dressmaker, would make a good loving wife. Respondent must be tall and dark, fond of home, and a tactful.

J. A., twenty-two, would like to correspond with a young lady, about nineteen. She must be good looking, dark, and a good singer. It is in a good position and will make a good husband to a loving wife.

EMILIA, nineteen, good looking, good singer and domesticated, would like to correspond with a young man, about twenty-two, of a cheerful, lively disposition, fond of home and a true wife.

ALICE, eighteen, slender, considered pretty, good musician, of a loving, easy tempered disposition, wishes to correspond with a tall, fair young man, about twenty, who is in a good business.

LIESE M. V., twenty-nine, medium height, fair, has a comfortable sum of money in case of marriage and expects a little fortune at a death, would like to correspond with a young man with a view to matrimony.

BESSIE, nineteen, medium height, fair, blue eyes, would like to correspond with a well educated young man not more than twenty-two. She is thoroughly domesticated, and would make a good wife.

MARION, a widow, would like to make the acquaintance of a respectable mechanic about forty to forty-six; she is thirty-four, passable looking, dark-gray eyes, rather stout, tall.

O. B. C., twenty-nine, wishes to find a wife. He is tall, rather slender, possessed of dark-brown curly hair, dark eyes, and a good income, is thoroughly domesticated, fond of music and singing, moderate in all his tastes, and very good tempered.

LOWELL JERRY, English Catholic, a widow, thirty-five, rather tall and stout, nice gray eyes and brown hair, would like to correspond with a respectable working man about forty, a Roman Catholic; looks will not be considered, but he must be affectionate and steady.

A. B. C., 5 ft. 7 in., rather dark, considered good looking, fond of home, and has 2000l., would like to correspond with a good looking young lady, with a view to matrimony, fair, with a little money, as he intends going into business. To a young lady that would try and make home happy he would make a kind, loving husband.

TAY AGATE, thirty, 5 ft. 7 in., a stoker in H.M.S., rather dark, considered good looking, has a little money saved, and intends leaving the service shortly, wishes to correspond with a tall, dark and accomplished young lady, not over twenty-five fond of home, and thoroughly domesticated.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED.

S. R. is responded to by—"E. J. T." who is loving, fond of home, domesticated, and just eighteen.

CLAUDE by—"Elena," eighteen, fair, domesticated, and amiable, good looking and thinks she would suit

LUCY B., nineteen, domesticated, fond of home and music and of a loving disposition, would like to hear further from "S. W."

CHARLIE MAC D. by—"Emma T." eighteen, fair, rather pretty, thoroughly domesticated, would do her very best to make his home a happy one and will be pleased to hear further from him.

* A letter has been received from Wm. C. DAISSY wishes to hear further from "A. W. M.," who says he is all she requires.

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